

A *to* Z

*Word Potpourri*

ESSAYS, STORIES, ADVENTURES, DREAMS  
CHRONICLES OF A FOOTLOOSE FORESTER

RICHARD PELLEK

*AuthorHouse™*  
1663 Liberty Drive  
Bloomington, IN 47403  
[www.authorhouse.com](http://www.authorhouse.com)  
Phone: 1 (800) 839-8640

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## A TO Z WORD POTPOURRI

The Chronicles of a **Footloose Forester** were compiled over a number of years, one story at a time. Events, observations, encounters, and episodes were the ingredients in the mix that got filed into his memory banks and extracted years later but only after it was decided to make them into his memoirs. **Afghanistan to Zambia: Chronicles of a Footloose Forester** (published in 2010) was the first distillation of those memories and was based on an alphabetical recounting of places he had been.

In the beginning, there was no intention of putting his chronicles into a book; the alphabetical listing of countries he had visited was, at the time in the early 1960s, only a device to properly respond to inquiries about his travels pursuant to obtaining and updating a yearly security clearance. At one time or another, the FBI, the Army Security Agency, the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of State all wanted his biographical information that included the places and the addresses where he had lived since 1931. Obviously, that meant every place since he was born. Thus, it was easier to compile a logical listing and to keep that list in his records for easier updating. The countries of Afghanistan and Zambia eventually worked their way into the list, thus his first book, **Afghanistan to Zambia: Chronicles of a Footloose Forester** was chosen as the title of his first book of memoirs. The process is ongoing.

Since the travel history to other countries swelled to 106 countries and territories of the United States, the A to Z listing was also a way to compartmentalize some of his fond memories of people, places, and events.

As a forester who worked in domestic and international locales, the A to Z listing had other applications for a **Footloose Forester** who had a lifelong interest in forest trees and tropical fruits. Accordingly, the second book of chronicles had a title that reminded him that the very common red maple tree (*Acer*

*rubrum*) could be seen daily from Maine to Florida and everywhere in between, in the states he had visited (49 of 50) during his career. A suitable title for the second book thus began to emerge. An A to Z theme led to bookend tree species names that were also a part of his reveries. It was gratifying to settle on a sub-tropical fruit tree commonly known as the jujube, and with the botanical name *Zyzyphus jujuba*. Two jujube trees are growing and thriving right next to his house in Virginia. Thus, another A to Z listing became the receptacle that included personal anecdotes about a potpourri of things in other countries and in the natural world, in general. The eventual name of his second book of memoirs emphasized his forestry interests, except that the stories that he wanted to share did not dwell solely on trees; or on peoples, places, animals, or events. Dreams and viewpoints about abstract subjects that he wanted to share were also summoned, sorted out, and organized into Volume I, *Essays & Dreams* that was published in 2015. And the personal blogs regarding tangible, physical, sometimes hair-raising, real-time episodes in reality were written into Volume II, *Stories & Adventures* that was published in early 2016.

Of the 340 blogs that still reside in computer archives, there are perhaps a hundred or so that have not yet been selected for inclusion in another book. This book and its title, **A to Z Word Potpourri: Chronicles of a Footloose Forester** is the final product. The next job is to make another list and decide which stories, essays, dreams, and adventures might become a suitable fifth book of memoirs that does not require chronology, background history, logical train of thought; or other *raison d'être*.

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## AN OLD PHOTO FROM HOME



Ask who? what? where? when? why? and how? ...and a story starts to develop

The photo above was put into the hands of the **Footloose Forester** only a couple of hours before it became the foundation of a Legacy Story that he is excited about writing. Brother Paul stopped by with the photo in his hand, and that was all it took to get the ball rolling. Entering the photo into a digital format was the highest priority, thus it was the first thing in mind as this story undergoes its first draft.

The exact place where the 1940s era photo was taken stands out clearly in the mind of the **Footloose Forester** because he linked it to a Google Earth satellite photo of the site. In the Google Earth software of high-resolution photos taken worldwide, it is possible to zoom in close enough to see cars and even

people walking on the street. In this case, an excavation of the wooded area just beyond the Pellek property line in 2006 made for an ideal opportunity to see the site with before-after coverage. For a curious **Footloose Forester** who lived there for about 40 years, the urge to see what eventually developed there was overpowering. A couple of tentative postings have recently been shared with the Google Earth Community of like-minded devotees who re-visit past haunts via geo-spatial searching. To those interested, the map coordinates of the old Pellek homestead site are: latitude 40.895272 and longitude -74.709688.

The family photo shown above brings back memories, as it should. But until now, the **Footloose Forester** did not have a copy, so was unable to put a historical context to it. And seeing the sharp shapes of the glacial rocks that emerged from the ground is a reminder that our family lived on the very spot where a field geology class could rightfully be conducted today.

Any photo having personal meaning can also touch a nerve that leads to that place in the brain where memories are hard-wired. For example, by looking at this photo more closely than he did the first few times, the **Footloose Forester** can say with confidence that the tree in the background is a crab apple belonging to our neighbors who lived in the white house. We children waited eagerly each summer for the opportunity to snack on its tiny, tart apples. The bushy plant at the right of the house is a begonia, although at the time we didn't call it by its name. The branches of a tree seemingly hanging over the begonia belonged to a Bartlett pear, the same kind we had in our back yard. And just below the lower window of the house is a place where **Footloose Forester** spent many hours sitting on the cool moss with his jackknife. The spot in Uncle Freddy's lawn was cool and shady, so much so that grass wouldn't grow there, but moss would. A smooth patch of moss was ideal for sticking the blade of his jackknife deep into the soil, in a game we called mumbly peg. Since he was a loner even at an early age, **Footloose Forester** usually played there alone.

Mom tried to grow forsythia on the stony bank behind us, and the scrawny plant on the right is one of them. Other forsythias behind our house did much better because the soil was better. Even getting the grass to grow in our lawn was a bit of a problem, however; what with the outcropped boulders and stony topsoil. The spot was, after all, the site of the terminal moraine of the Wisconsin Glacier.

In later years, **Footloose Forester** got plenty of chances to mow the lawn and remembers two of the largest boulders that remained embedded too deeply for Dad to pry them out. Over the course of a decade or

more, Dad did manage to dig out the smaller ones and subsequently leveled the ground and planted grass seed. But because he worked two full- time jobs, he was gone most of the time and the rocky ground had to wait.

By now the memories of our modest home on Church Street have begun to gush. Each small memory seems to link to another one. The process began with an inspection of the photo above and then asking: who? what? where? when? and associated questions. The answers formed the framework for a legacy story that is just now starting to take form.

Photojournalists begin with their snapshots and video strips. Each of us can be photojournalists with respect to our own family legacy stories, but the text that accompanies our photos can make our stories come alive in a way that a mere image cannot. Only insiders and those with personal knowledge can make the interpretations that are vital. According to an ancient Chinese proverb, “A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees.” Will we be wise enough to see the legacy stories that can emerge from old family photos?

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## A STORY ONLY ONE PERSON CAN TELL

This Was Home For More Than 55 Years



A picture can prompt 10,000 words

This photo was rejected for inclusion in a previous book of memoirs because of presumed copyright law violation.

At first glance, the photo above seems to be some kind of residential area dissected by a couple of major roads and sprinkled by trees and other greenery. To a handful of residents of Netcong, New Jersey, the scene holds more than a bit of nostalgia, recent history, and personal stories. The scene also has present day links to a distant geological past.

Thanks to modern satellite imagery, digital mapping, and computer sharing technology; we are in a position to say a great deal about what is in the photo above. As the only living person who has the longest



memory of the subject matter, and a personal interest in preserving some small part of the history, the **Footloose Forester** deigns to describe the scene above.

Starting with the yellow stickpin, the rectangular patch of grass marks the place where the Pellek family lived for about 55 years until the house was torn down. Today only a couple of Norway Maple trees remain along the sidewalk on Church Street. Children who attended St. Michael's School adjacent to that patch of grass can still relate to the scene; and those who attended prior to the year 2000 may remember the red house up the street, right out the windows that faced in that direction.

John and Helen Pellek moved into the house at 14 Church Street in the early 1940s. The **Footloose Forester** was pretty young at the time but does remember such things as the radio announcement of the bombing of Pearl Harbor; and the end of World War II when he joined with his older brothers and neighborhood kids (the Sipples, the O'Brians and Hank Shubert) in parading up and down Church Street banging on pots and pans.

The photo below shows **Footloose Forester** in knee pants, just as he described in one or two of his other chronicles about those growing up years in Netcong. His sister Mary is three years younger; and in the photo below appears to be about three years old at that time. She and **Footloose Forester** are the only ones from that photo still alive to say something about that particular photo scene, although three later siblings; Roberta, Jim and Paul can also relate to it.



Photo taken at 14 Church Street, Netcong, NJ in 1940s

The first house in the background is no longer there. It was torn down prior to the razing of the Pellek home a few years later, about 2001-2002. With reference to the Google Earth photo, the exact spot where we were standing for the photo is directly north of the mounds of glacial boulders framed with a yellow box. A couple of those smaller boulders are shown protruding from the ground near my father's right arm, in the family photo.

The glacial history of Northern New Jersey is especially interesting because the land shows distinct zones that were entirely covered with ice, southern reaches that were untouched by the glaciers, and a long, ragged zone of geomorphological land forms that mark the southernmost advance of the most recent ice age feature--the Wisconsin Glacier. The Lakeland Area of New Jersey is unique precisely because the varied after-effects of glaciation pock the area with lines of scoured stone ridges, numerous small lakes and ponds known as kettle lakes, expanses of sand deposits known as kames; and the terminus of the Wisconsin Glacier at Netcong and other known locations. It was the deposition of a deep trove of subterranean boulders, assorted rocks and other unconsolidated glacial till materials near St. Michael's Roman Catholic Church that makes the Google Earth scene so special. Remnants of that subterranean trove of moraine material are clearly visible at several places in the Google Earth photo.

A person who wishes to see the Google scene more clearly should zoom in with the Google Earth computer software at map coordinates: lat. 40.895272 and long. -74.709688. Visitors to Netcong can drive to the present-day parking area and witness lane barriers constructed from medium sized boulders, some of which show smooth and rounded sides that were polished as they were transported within the Wisconsin Glacier some 25, 000 years ago. One does not have to be a geologist to note the different kinds of rocks standing side-by-side.

At other places they will see a stony bank of broken rock shards of a dark shale, predominately. But at the top of the parking lot they will see the remains of large boulders of sandstone, gneiss, green and pink granite, conglomerate, limestone, and shale that were transported from different sources of bedrock as the Wisconsin Glacier finally slowed to a halt and deposited all of them into a common trove of unconsolidated materials at the terminal moraine in Netcong, New Jersey.

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## ALWAYS THE AMATEUR

Life can be so disheartening when you grow up without good looks, athletic ability, high intelligence, or with physical limitations. Poor posture and annoying mannerisms also add to the handicaps that we may have and not even be aware of. Combined, our outward traits may add up to establishing us as personality stereotypes that we find hard to change in the eyes of the world.

Young people below the age of six or seven probably are not aware of their faults to the extent of older children. The teen age years arguably are the most stressful; not only are peer pressures beginning to pull us in one direction after another, but pimples and such begin to rear their ugly heads. Literally and figuratively. Pimples and acne tear at our sense of self-worth, despite being told by adults that beauty is only skin deep.

We can choose to fight acne and pimples with creams and cosmetic lotions, but we also have to fight to establish a sense of self-worth, despite the number of detractors in our midst. But if we won't stand up for ourselves, then who will? Other than someone directly related to you, why would anybody in your neighborhood or school want to defend or praise you? It is rather astonishing that we humans seldom go beyond family and close friends in protecting and enhancing the dignity of other people. But why should they? Their personal agendas are central to their lives, just as our own personal agendas overshadow those of others. Thus, if we do not become the people we would hope to be, the fault is largely our own. We may not be able to control how tall we become, or to choose the color of our eyes, but we can choose to be happy with who we are. And we can choose to be better than we are now. We can train to run faster, sing better, climb a little higher, and care more about people and about things that matter. Nobody is going to do that for us, so we must do it ourselves. We can choose to try, or we can choose to sit on the sidelines.

Through it all, the self-effacing **Footloose Forester** was always somewhere well back in the pack. Too short to play basketball; too light to compete in high school football, too dumb to get into college.... those are things he told himself when he was growing up. That is, until he had a frank discussion with himself about the alternatives. Henry Ford once said, "If you think you can do it, then you can." "And if you think that you can't do it, then you can't." It was a case of deciding what kind of person he wanted to be. He used to joke that when he grew up he wanted to be rich, handsome, talented, famous, and brilliant. But things didn't quite turn out that way. Then he joked that 4 out of 5 wasn't too bad. All joking aside, we can choose to be happy about who we are; and we all can choose to try to change things. If we try we may fail, but if we don't try, then failure is pretty much a guarantee. Being labeled as a rookie, a newbie, a duffer, or an amateur no longer bothers him.

Thus, with those things in mind, the **Footloose Forester** took his own counsel and participated in basketball, football and softball, golf and other sports, albeit not in any team uniform. He was always mediocre but always ready to participate. For example, when he was 17 years old he was the fastest kid on our pick-up softball team; and by the time he was 56 he was the slowest geezer on our softball team in Kenya. He was the Captain of his previous team in Haiti, not because he was a superior player, but because he personally organized the team, procured some of the equipment, promoted league play, made up the team roster and personally mowed the outfield before the games. He was team captain because nobody else wanted the job; but he got to name the team—the Geritols. During all of those growing up years he was an amateur who looked like and played like a rookie, but there was no happier person on the team. In his later playing years he told people that every time he walked off the baseball diamond or golf course under his own power, he had won, even if his team did not.

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## IT'S SATURDAY, WHERE IS THE YARDSTICK?

There were seven kids in the Pellek household, so there was plenty of mischief under our roof, and elsewhere. Five boys and two girls kept our mom awake sometimes, but most of the mischief was not too serious. Each infraction, during the week, however; was kept in my mother's mental note book. Thus, by Saturday there was plenty of punishment to mete out. Saturday was the day she chose to dole out the punishment for infractions, and a wooden yardstick was the instrument of choice wielded by mother, the arbiter of justice. When she said to go and get the yardstick, we knew that our hour of reckoning was at hand.

Each child was expected to stand in line for their whacks with the yardstick, starting with the oldest and continuing down the age ladder until the youngest was given his or her whacks on the backside. There were no exceptions based on gender; if a boy or a girl had three remembered infractions, it was three whacks with the yardstick. On the other hand, if one of us was a darling angel during the week, there were no whacks forthcoming. But we all still had to stand in line as Mom reviewed our record.

On some occasions she didn't remember exactly what the infraction was, so she would ask us what we in line for. Funny how we always came clean about our mischiefs. But coming clean often took twists and turns and shades of the truth until the unadorned facts were exposed.

The Saturday punishment line existed for many years; thus, we were well indoctrinated about what to expect. There was no lying; and in my family we learned early on to take personal responsibility for our actions, and then to accept the consequences. A few whacks with the yardstick stung our bottoms but we always spent some time thinking about our behavior, both before and after the sessions in discipline.



Bobbie Ann was probably punished least, and as she stands here, at this very moment, in front of my computer to affirm that truth, the reason why, as she explained, was likely because she was the quiet, most timid one in the family. She was also too young to know that we older boys had paved the way of the punishment routine so well, that by the time that she became eligible to be spanked with the yardstick, she knew what to expect on Saturday mornings. But in her behalf, she also was the most docile of our siblings. Thus, she usually didn't have nearly the number of infractions that the boisterous, exuberant boys had in their genes.

The reader might wonder who in the family got the most whacks because of their infractious records. But that is not the issue here. The point is that we all remember standing in line for our just punishment...and that was a whack on the back side with a yardstick...on a Saturday morning.

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## MY BEST CHRISTMAS PRESENT, EVER

My favorite Christmas present, ever? That time in 1955 when I came in from the cold into the warm sunlit room after morning Mass, to view all the colorfully wrapped presents under the tree. My dad was sitting in an easy chair watching me, then he unexpectedly spoke. He said, “the best present isn’t under the tree, it’s on the tree.” When I looked up I saw a hand written, plain white envelope, with a single sheet of paper inside. On that piece of lined school paper my 5-year-old brother Paul had scrawled, in the large letters of a child, how much he loved our father.

Since my back was turned to everyone, I slipped out of the room unnoticed, as tears started to gush from my eyes. I went outside to the back of the property so nobody would hear me sobbing. That was the best Christmas present ever. It wasn’t my present; it was a gift to all of us. And the tears are still in my eyes as I write these lines.

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## HITCHHIKING IS NOW JUST A MEMORY

Years before he would call himself the **Footloose Forester**, a restless boy who liked to be on the road, again...and again...and again, often saw places near home by hitchhiking there. His parents did not discourage him, although they may have been concerned when his travels became more and more distant. They say that nothing succeeds like success, so perhaps it was natural of him to think that if he could regularly hitch rides from Netcong, New Jersey to New Brunswick where he went to college, maybe he could also hitch to other states. In retrospect, not getting his first car until he was 21 years old, the satisfying of his urge to travel had to include other options. Hitchhiking was the main one and was quite often an adventurous choice.

He knew a few stories about other hitchhikers being victimized; and sometimes the hitchhikers were the perpetrators, but he was determined to be observant in avoiding perilous situations and to put on a game face, if that became necessary. On the other hand, he had a Pollyanna approach about the basic goodness of people. He picked up hitchhikers when he drove his brother's car; and tried to be transparently non-threatening when he was the one standing on the side of a roadway. There would be stories in the future, but nothing about which he was bitter.

When he first contemplated writing a book, he thought it might be about hitchhiking. The title "51 rides" now seems, in retrospect, to be silly and not as suggestive as he had intended. Yes, it took 51 rides to get from Netcong, New Jersey to Placerville, California but after trying to make each ride into a story interesting enough to hold the attention of readers, the effort proved to be impossible. Some of the rides were for only a few blocks in major cities like Knoxville, Tennessee and Beaumont, Texas; but a few of



them were for hundreds of miles. Those are among the ones that the **Footloose Forester** remembers the best.

During these days of Internet blogs and instant commentary, the **Footloose Forester** surfed upon a web page devoted to creating snapshot memoirs. The web masters at Smith Magazine impose their directive to all potential memoir writers to think of limiting memoirs to only 6 words. That imperative, as an exercise at least, was standard fare when interviewers from Instant Memoirs conducted their sessions with authors. When **Footloose Forester** wrestled with that proposition he came up with: Hitchhiking Student, Traveling Forester and Observer.

As the years went by, short trip hitch-hiking evolved into longer journeys. A few of the adventures were in foreign lands; such faith did he hold in the basic goodness of people of other cultures to communicate by their words and actions in sharing the long, lonely roads. The day would arrive; however, that he would acknowledge himself as a backpacker in spirit and in his chosen lifestyle.

At the time of this present posting, time-stamped for veracity, he and his faithful travel companion of 44 years are ...On the road...again! in Minnesota more than 1400 hundred miles from home in Virginia. Another thousand miles are on the agenda before we turn back toward home. But this time, we are traveling in the comfort of an air-conditioned automobile, not hitchhiking.

UPDATE: 27 NOVEMBER 2014

Past and often vague memories of hitch-hiking came in last night's dream. The **Footloose Forester** recalls visiting old friends and colleagues around the country, the kind of adventure that always had a destination in mind, but usually without a travel plan. Sometimes the visits were in his own car but many of the earlier trips were by hitch-hiking because he did not always have a car at his disposal.

The trip to a Forest Service fire tower in Montana to visit a college classmate had to be via his thumb. A trip to his former Netcong, New Jersey acquaintance in Prescott, Arizona was a round-trip affair from Phoenix, hitch-hiking both ways. There were others, but the temporary clarity of the dream evaporated when he tried to put a few of them into this Chronicle.

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## AW, SHUCKS, MA'AM

### M for Montana

Having a railroad pass to travel anywhere in the United States was part of the plan to make a summer adventure in a new state after his sophomore year at Rutgers. He thoroughly enjoyed the previous summer working on the Nez Perce National Forest in Idaho, but something deep inside him always wanted to see what was beyond the next mountain, rather than to return to the place he already knew. Some folks take vacations to the same place, year after year. The **Footloose Forester** knew that such a choice was something he would not want for himself. So, when he got the offer of a job on the Kootenai National Forest through the Forestry Department at Rutgers, he eagerly took it. Getting there or close by, on a train, was going to be another adventure.

The first couple of legs were the same as the previous year: Netcong, New Jersey to Buffalo; then Buffalo to Chicago. At Chicago he had to change to the Burlington Northern line to Minneapolis; and part of the way was along the west bank of the Mississippi River. He delighted in recognizing the deep loess banks at Council Bluffs, Iowa. They were described during his geology class as Aeolian deposits transported by wind from more than a thousand miles away. Such morphological features were always somewhat mysterious to him and required a visual interpretation to gain an appreciation of them. If he recalls correctly, their probable source was in the Yakima River Valley of Washington, an area of gouged landscapes with volcanic soils. That is to say, the loess gouged out of the Yakima Valley was transported by wind and re-deposited along the banks of the Mississippi River at Council Bluffs, Iowa. Proving such things is what some geologists are routinely expected to do. Also, along the way, he finished the last of

the sandwiches he had packed from home. Coping as a **Footloose Forester** often meant carrying the kinds of supplies most likely to be needed, so having food in his duffel bag was an essential item.

From Minneapolis west all the way to Montana was on the Northern Pacific Railroad. Along the way, he remembers meeting a young Montana gentleman who was returning from an enlistment in the US Army in Germany, and a young girl who was taking a summer job at Glacier National Park. The reason he remembers them both is because of the conversation they shared before the returning soldier disembarked at Big Sandy, Montana, his home town. She was from New Hampshire and her naiveté was unmistakable. She asked us where we were from, and when the lad said he hailed from Big Sandy, Montana, she then asked him where that was. He explained that it was a little place on the high plains. She then asked him what he did there. He replied that he was a cow puncher. She asked again, “a what?” He again replied, “a cow puncher.” Then, with a blush on her pretty face, she once again asked, “What’s that?” **Footloose Forester** could not help but chuckle when he said, “Shucks, ma’am, I’m a cowboy.” You just can’t make this stuff up.

The cowboy got off a few stops later at Big Sandy and she got off at the West Glacier stop, a little further on. **Footloose Forester** continued on to disembark at Libby, Montana. For the life of him, he cannot remember the slightest thing about the station or how he went the final miles to his duty post. Funny how one remembers some things in great detail, but cannot remember other things, at all.

The assignment at Warland Ranger Station was 25 miles north of the National Forest headquarters at Libby. He was supposed to be assigned as a Timber Management Aide, which meant that he would be marking timber for sale and would likely be given a pick-up truck to get him to the timber sales. It was a job he was looking forward to, but alas, he did not pass the depth perception test for a Montana Driver’s License. He is still puzzled about that test because he never before had a problem with depth perception and never before or after failed a depth perception test. In any case, they pulled him out of the woods assignment and put him on the On-Station Fire Control crew.

The job was not his cup of tea, but it was a learning experience. For example, he learned how to put a proper edge on fire-fighting shovels, axes and Pulaski tools; to fine tune chain saws; to maintain Pacific Marine pumps; and a few other chores. He was also given the assignment to take the local weather data, which involved taking daily temperature, relative humidity, and fuel moisture index, to arrive at the current fire danger index. Along the way, he and others put a new shingle roof on the Ranger

Station. Those days along the aquamarine colored Kootenai River also included a few forest fires, but he remembers only one of them well enough to provide a few details.

The extremely dry fire season in Northern Montana that year of 1958 had us going back and forth. One week we put in 105 hours, but he doesn't remember all the places he and the crew went putting out smokes. The one he does remember was called the Stone Mountain fire. From a starting point along the Kootenai River where we disembarked from the crew bus, to the site of the fire near the top of Stone Mountain, was about five miles—uphill. There was no other road that would get us nearer, and no chance to ferry us in helicopters. In those days the use of helicopters was very limited and we did not have one on the Kootenai. So, it was a five-mile slog uphill. At 25 acres, it was a moderately large fire, as fires go, in northern forests. **Footloose Forester** remembers having to rest along the trail (with the other fire fighters) every half mile the first day, every mile the second day on the job, every other mile on the third day, and so on. We were not looking to set records, but after the end of a week we could all walk the entire five miles uphill without stopping. That was a fact worth remembering; and **Footloose Forester** felt like he was getting into pretty good shape.

At some point during that first week on the fire line, he got sick from eating days-old baloney sandwiches. It seems that a logistics coordinator in Libby ordered 1000 sandwiches shortly after the fire broke out; and those sandwiches were the only food we had on the fire line for at least four days. Eventually, the hot sun got to them and **Footloose Forester** and others got food poisoning. We re-named the fire Baloney Hill. You could see a half dozen baloney sandwiches poking through the stubs of burned off branches along the way, to remind you that others were sick of them, too. It would be another nine years before he could eat another baloney sandwich; such was the psychological aversion to the thought of eating something that made you sick.

The Kelly-green color of the glacier-fed Kootenai coming out of the Canadian Rockies was spectacular and the water was cold, even in the summer. On occasion a few of us would take a dip, but never for more than a few minutes. Mostly, we spent our time along the banks fishing for cutthroat trout. There were plenty of them but fishing would have been better if the current was not so swift. It would be a great river on which to drift downstream in an inner tube. At least that was the case before the Libby Dam was built downstream and flooded the river valley all the way back into Canada and; in the process, forming the present-day Lake Koocanusa. The name probably implies its Canada and USA origins. The old Warland Ranger Station is now underwater.

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*Chronicles of a Footloose Forester*  
*By Dick Pellek*

KMB662...939...4-16

He remembers faces and most names, but not all. Those mental blocks explain a person's propensity to block certain unpleasant memories but do not explain the inability to recall happy events from the past. When it comes to the several warm reveries about the magnificent El Dorado National Forest in California, the **Footloose Forester** is inclined to write a seminal series of chronicles and chooses to use real names to insert into real places and actual events. Real names add veracity to stories, as long as the use of names is not intended to discredit or defame them. In that case, the **Footloose Forester** may relate a true story, but avoid using names in order to protect the dignity of the innocents in the telling.

This chronicle about the El Dorado National Forest, however; uses real names freely, to describe settings that existed so long ago that it is likely that nobody will be offended. The faces were there but not all of the names. It took several days to assemble enough of them to make sense from the standpoint of their regular jobs and the relationship with the **Footloose Forester** as they interacted over the course of more than two years. Here in reconstruction then, are a few memories that stimulate the personal nostalgia of a doting retired forester who unashamedly yearns for the yesteryear of his satisfying career... On the road...again!!!

On some days it was time spent with Pete Stoffel, or Frank Oyung, or Herm Zittel of the forest management cadre; on other days it was time spent with Warren Magnuson, Merle Brooks, Dick Vincent, Dave Barker, Bob Lewen and Larry Leel when we were working on camp construction projects as a team effort. And Bill Berry, Harry Veerkamp, Mike Berti, Reno Franchetti, and Doug Morris from the transient fire barracks at Pacific Ranger Station. Or in planning meals with Jim the log scaler who, along

with the **Footloose Forester**, reluctantly accepted the jobs of food purchasing and cooking for the whole fire barracks crew during tree planting season, because we were much better at it than they were.

Or on fire control missions with Joe Gorrell and Al Swank and Keith Butts and Larry Cabodi when it came to discussions about firefighting plans and real-time execution. Time on the fire line also involved seasoned veterans from other ranger districts because timely fire control sometimes was a matter of proximity and available manpower. So, there were those times with Jack Quigley, Ron Carlson, Dick Hurley and Dave Noni from Placerville District whose jurisdiction and area of responsibility included a long narrow corridor along U.S. Highway 50 but cut through other districts. Time with Wynne Maule was a little of everything because he was the District Ranger and in overall charge of everything in his district. Other officials from other ranger districts also came and went. To be sure, the official inspections from Headquarters staff in Placerville were somewhat foreboding because headquarters people usually did not spend their time in places where things were running smoothly. But the day-to-day tableau of life on the El Dorado was deeply satisfying to the **Footloose Forester** who thrived on the routine adventures and the prospects of ever more exciting ones.

The one person who played a constant and consistent role in the whole operation was KMB662, our ranger district dispatcher named Barbara Stratton. Her voice could be overheard on the short-wave radio when we were in the small station house, and even when we were passing by outside. But most two-way contacts and very brief dialogues with the dispatcher were by two-way radio by a **Footloose Forester** who was usually at his campground headquarters 27 miles away. When **Footloose Forester** came on duty in the morning and called in: KMB662...939...4-16, it was a routine check-in announcing that he was on duty and on the air. If nothing exciting was happening at the moment, Barbara would simply say: KMB662...10-4...939. The 10-4 code for OK was quick and unambiguous but overused by many people in other circumstances. It was reassuring, nevertheless; that everything was OK between KMB662 (ranger station headquarters) and 939, the truck-mounted radio receiver in the 1952 Chevy 4-on-the-floor workhorse pickup driven by the **Footloose Forester**.

Only when KMB662 initiated a conversation did it usually mean that something was in the air and the **Footloose Forester** was going to be part of the action. Those are the times we lived for.

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## SMOKE ALONG THE RUBICON TRAIL

From among the few categories that form the framework of the storyteller's letterhead of the **Footloose Forester**: Essays, Stories, Adventure, Dreams, this chronicle and a delicious story is based on an adventure that was recalled in last night's dream. It brings together some of the most gratifying components of past adventures that were captured for future dreams, and years later were committed to paper in the form of chronicle stories. This chronicle is a reprise of one of the most gratifying adventures, set in a beautiful forest and along one of the most spectacular jeep trails in the United States.

The Rubicon Trail is so spectacular and so challenging to off-roaders that the manufacturers of the Jeep brand of 4 X 4 vehicles named one of their models the Rubicon. That choice of names likely had something to do with the fact that its rugged frame and body construction had been field tested as a prototype model along the Rubicon Trail in California, notably the toughest test of off-road severity of any jeep trail in the United States. The **Footloose Forester** never read any of the advertising hype about the Rubicon model, but he did see a few of them on the road and intuitively knew that the automotive engineers at Jeep had sought out a suitable "test track" for the model they were going to promote to serious devotees of off-roading adventures.





This is one short stretch of the Rubicon Trail

This chronicle adventure → dream → story will always remain as a favorite memory because it is a mental reprise of the thrilling beauty of the rugged granite strewn uplands of the El Dorado National Forest, decked out in magnificent patches of red and white fir, ponderosa and sugar pine, and Western red cedar. The sight of them brought instant joy into the heart of the **Footloose Forester** then, and a sense of joy in the re-telling of their splendor today.

The **Footloose Forester** was privileged to be chosen to join two other U.S. Forest Service employees to seek out a suspicious smoke high along a ridge line overlooking the Rubicon River. The river itself was the dividing line between the Lake Valley District and his own Pacific District of the El Dorado National Forest, so the aerial reconnaissance spotter who had called in the smoke, and our dispatcher at district ranger headquarters had to decide who would be assigned to check it out before it became a larger forest fire. Bob Logan from headquarters was senior and was chosen to lead the hunt. Bob Lewen, another seasoned Forest Service employee who was in the vicinity of the trailhead of the Rubicon Trail was also dispatched by radio to rendezvous at the trail junction with **Footloose Forester**. It was his territory and



although he was nominally a Recreation Patrolman and not usually assigned to firefighting duties, he was driving our single, small, rugged 4 X 4 jeep that would be able to negotiate the narrow and treacherous Rubicon Trail. The other guys had larger pick-up trucks that were unsuitable for the task.

We all transferred to the pale green Forest Service jeep at the rendezvous point and **Footloose Forester** proceeded up the Rubicon Trail with the experienced Bob Logan guiding him with the aid of a topographic map that showed the approximate location of the suspected smoke, as described by the aerial recon spotter. The trail is every bit as spectacular as the hobbyist off-roaders have described. As he has already mentioned, the **Footloose Forester** considered it a privilege to be there—driving up the famous and spectacular Rubicon Trail. And that is where the story changes into something a bit less heroic.

At a point where the trail disappeared and the only passage upward was through a narrow ravine strewn with large boulders, it became clear why only a jeep would be able to crawl forward. We proceeded slowly and haltingly up and over the field of boulders until we came to one that was so large and pitched so steeply that there was a possibility of tipping the jeep over backward. The ravine was very narrow and the sides were so steep that there was no way around it. Although the **Footloose Forester** was willing to take on the challenge, he demurred out of a sense of foreboding that he would lose his job if he was the one who let the jeep tip over backward. He was a seasonal employee who didn't earn the loyalty that would be afforded to either of his companions. So, Bob Logan took the wheel and negotiated the jeep over the large boulder. But not before the jeep tipped backward sufficient to squash the exhaust pipe against another boulder and kill the engine. We managed to pry the exhaust pipe open again and by changing the angle of attack up the boulder, Bob got us through the last major obstacle. To say that the rest of the trail was a pleasure drive would be an understatement. Spectacular is the only word that keeps coming to mind.

Among the most precious memories of a somewhat romantic **Footloose Forester** who seeks out adventure, those short hours on the ridge above the Rubicon River will forever be cherished. The smoke we were seeking happened to be very close to the point where we stopped on a level stretch of the trail at the highest elevation on the ridgeline. And putting out the small spot fire but potential forest fire was one of the easiest in his memory. Oh, there was plenty of smoke wafting into the air above the small patch of smoldering duff, but no large fire. We put it out in less than an hour. More joy in the knowledge of doing what he wanted to do in life, in a place so beautiful that he knew it was a privilege to be there. The experience was like checking off an item on his bucket list.

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## THE DIRTY RIFLE

Every company in the training battalion at Fort Ord, California had an ongoing but unspoken competition for best company in each training cycle. Basic Training in the US Army in those days of the 1960s was limited to a few military installations on the East Coast most notably Fort Dix in New Jersey, and on the West Coast, it was Fort Ord in California. Ironically, the **Footloose Forester** who hailed from New Jersey and was originally registered there under the Selective Service Act (the draft), managed to have his registration changed to California where he went to live after he graduated from college. Thus, when his draft number came up, he was inducted into the Army in Oakland, California and sent to Fort Ord for basic training.

Winter was coming on as he joined in with other draftees and the majority component of those who enlisted, to endure field training in the cold. He was pleased that winters on the Monterrey Peninsula where Fort Ord was located are rather mild compared to Fort Dix, so did not expect the extreme cold and discomforts of the kind of winters he knew growing up. Truth be told, Fort Ord was in a beautiful location on the magnificent Monterrey Peninsula and the mild winter unfolded as he had hoped.

There was a widespread and continuous atmosphere of competition during basic training; competition among individuals who wanted to prove themselves as worthy soldiers, competition among the draftees and those who volunteered to enlist, competition among the platoon sergeants, and competition among the five companies of our training battalion. In the end there were going to be ceremonies recognizing the best soldier, the best platoon in each company, and the best company in the battalion. Thus, the issue of whether the raw recruits coming into boot camp were enlisted men or were draftees meant a great deal to the training staff there.

The platoon sergeants knew that the draftees who were also college graduates made better soldiers, on average, than most of those who enlisted who had not finished high school or joined because they had no appreciable job skills. Of course, saying that out loud was taboo because virtually all of the drill instructors and platoon sergeants were themselves high school graduates or less, but who decided to stay in the military and worked their way up through the ranks. That is not a knock on the many, many fine soldiers that **Footloose Forester** knew over the years. It is simply an acknowledgement that the college graduates among the draftees tended to score better in varied battery tests and most of them were more mature in age and demeanor than enlistees who joined right out of high school. Although the Army much preferred having enlistees who graduated from high school and pressed to make having a diploma a requirement, in those days of the 1960s they just could not abandon all of the drop-outs and even accepted some with criminal backgrounds, if their records were for minor offenses.

Needless to say, the debate over who makes a better soldier—the enlistee or the draftee never was and never could be settled because the draft was finally abandoned near the end of the Viet Nam War. And we draftees at Fort Ord knew better than to bring it up. It was a no-win situation because draftees and enlistees wore the same uniforms and were expected to perform the same duties. Looking back, however; it is not just coincidence that when it came to open competition among the five companies in our training battalion for the distinction of Outstanding Company, our platoon sergeant, Ronald Miles, sought out the college graduates who were also draftees to groom them for the upcoming competition. He, of course, kept his plan to himself but there were telltale indicators. Needless to say, the level of resentment was telling within the platoons and among companies. High school graduates and drop-outs resented college graduates and especially those who were drafted into service and went on to outperform them. But Sergeant Miles knew the score and knew the stakes. Since he wanted to win both the competition for Best Training Company and Soldier of the Cycle, he secretly groomed certain inductees—all college graduates and all draftees.

This tale is a cathartic acknowledgment that Sergeant Miles planned to groom the **Footloose Forester** as his candidate for Soldier of the Cycle. Every soldier had to prove himself at every skill and perform every duty, but the **Footloose Forester** got a big boost in a way that went unannounced at the time. It was all about his dirty rifle.

During one of the many rifle training exercises, **Footloose Forester** was chosen (at random) by the firing range NCO to simulate being an enemy combatant taking up a defensive position in a foxhole and

repelling an attack by a line of skirmishers. To accomplish this, the NCO provided him with about 300 rounds of blank .30 caliber ammunition to fire at the skirmishers, with his own rifle. It was great fun and a memorable day on the range. But when the long day was over and we marched back to our barracks in the early evening, the armory had to be opened to allow our company to return their unfired rifles to their assigned places in the gun racks. On the other hand, the rifle barrel of the **Footloose Forester** was caked with the baked-on residue of 300 rounds of ammo. Sergeant Miles would not be happy to have his candidate exposed with the dirtiest rifle in Fort Ord.

As serendipity would have it, a few days later we GIs were given the opportunity to leave post for the Christmas holidays. **Footloose Forester** declined to leave because his entire family was thousands of miles away on the East Coast, so he signed a waiver declining the leave. He stayed on post, alone. Except for the appearance of Sergeant Miles who interrupted his Christmas holiday at his home nearby to attend to a nagging problem. The dirty rifle of the **Footloose Forester** was unpresentable in any inspection that preceded the competition for Soldier of the Cycle. But Sgt. Miles had a plan.

Sergeant Miles informed the **Footloose Forester** that he would leave an upper story window in one of the barracks buildings open so that if he approached the building from the back side, the **Footloose Forester** would easily be able to step onto the roof and enter through the unlocked window on the second story. The barracks he chose was built into a steep bank and jumping onto the roof was part of the plan, besides, the main doors on the ground floor were kept locked for security purposes. Furthermore, Sergeant Miles got the permission of the regular armorer who knew that one of the rifles in his bank of rifle racks was outrageously neglected. Both of them would look bad if the dirty rifle was discovered during an inspection.

At the appointed hour on a quiet Saturday, **Footloose Forester** appeared at the armory and secured his dirty rifle and gun cleaning paraphernalia and proceeded stealthily to the back window of the barracks building that belonged to a different platoon than his own. Sergeant Miles may have had a key to our own platoon barracks, but not to this one.

A short jump onto the roof, a quick entry through the unlocked window, a rapid but thorough cleaning of his M-I Garand rifle, and an equally stealthy return of the rifle to its assigned slot in the rifle rack... and the **Footloose Forester** was home free. **Footloose Forester** won the Soldier of the Cycle competition, Sergeant Miles won the Best Company competition and his progeny squad leader had managed to keep everyone in the dark about the hanky-panky that took place.

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## UP THE ZUGSPITZE

### Telling Stories With Pictures

A book with pictures always adds something positive to the storyline. Short stories usually don't have pictures but that does not mean that pictures or sketches don't suit the short-story genre. With the ever-changing sophistication of computer technology, we should be seeing more maps, photos, scanned documents and other embedded objects in short stories. No, we will soon be seeing a new genre of creative writing. Perhaps librarians around the world will be obliged to catalogue short stories with embeds in a way that is different from the present cataloguing protocol.

This chronicle is an attempt to retell a true story in such a way that the magnificence of the scenery, itself, is more compelling than the words in the narrative. The story is about the time when the **Footloose Forester** came within a few moments of death as he attempted to scale the Zugspitze, the highest mountain in Germany. As he reflects upon the events of the past, he is gratified to know that the experience was a joyful one then and is a joyful memory now.

A young, confident **Footloose Forester** on leave from his US Army post in Germany in 1962 decided to climb a mountain in the Bavarian Alps. He began his solo trek from the shores of a resort lake known as Eibsee, and hiked south toward the Austrian border, a border shared with the ridge line of the Zugspitze (Figure 1).

The day was bright and warm so it seemed that he would be able to reach the top and return via the cable car that departed from the restaurant on the summit, before it got dark. There were plenty of ski trails on the lower slopes of Zugspitze, so finding a suitable trail to follow was no problem. At some point the

trees and thin soils of the lower slopes gave way to stone on which no vegetation whatsoever was evident on any side. Some would describe it as solid stone, just to make the point; but upon close inspection one could also see fissures and cracks in the various faces that made climbing possible. The **Footloose Forester** was interested in getting to the top by challenging himself to find a way that was not only realistic; but doing it before it got dark. He didn't want to spend the night shivering in some crevice away from the wind. Besides, he didn't have any food.

The climb was upward through a well-traversed route of skiers who went as high as they could before descending though a col to the bottom of the mountain. When rock replaced soft ground you could stand on, the **Footloose Forester** then started to ascend hand-over-hand until he cleared the last ridge that led to the sector where upward ascent seemed likely. It was not too difficult or dangerous at that point because there was always a hand-hold and several foot-holds from which to choose. The last gesture before attaining the top of the rock ridge, however; was with the aid of a piton that had been left in a rock fissure by former climbers using ropes and pitons. Once on top of the ridge, the **Footloose Forester** was able to survey the massive concave bowl in front of him, and from whence the ascent to the top had to commence. The yellow stickpin in Figure 1 shows the location of the point from which the most difficult part of the climb began. It is also the point at which he almost lost his life.

From his survey position on top of the ridge to the east, he descended down into the concave bowl; passed within a few feet of the drop-off of a talus slope that is so prominent a part of the concave bowl that it can be seen for miles; and began to again climb upward on the west side of the bowl. He was seeking a route up the west side that had enough fractured faces to perhaps permit a climber to negotiate a way to the top of the last ridge line leading to the summit of Zugspitze. He was doing well enough to find one foot-hold and hand-hold after another. Eventually, however, the possibility of upward movement came down to a dangerous move. It required abandoning the mountain climbing rule of having at least one hand and one foot in contact with the surface at all times.

As he contemplated the prospect of returning to the last position below him (a single granite nub only about four inches across) and finding another route to the top, it started to rain. He knew then and there that trying to drop down onto the tiny granite surface of wet stone below him would not be possible, so he had to go up. The **Footloose Forester** smiled and said a prayer of thanksgiving for the privilege of being on that beautiful mountain in the morning sunshine; then he made his move.



From a one-foot, one-hand perch he had to change position to attempt a leap upward to a 400-pound boulder that sat at the edge of the talus slope to his left. The boulder was partially wedged at a choke point just above the drop-off where, if dislodged, it would be free-fall about a thousand feet to the lower slope below. The yellow stick-pin shows the location of the impasse in Figure 2; and the red line traces the intended route to the ridgeline leading to the top.



Overview of Zugspitze and environs  
Final ascent marked by red line

First order of business was to switch from a left-hand and left-foot hold on a small granite nub, to a right-hand and right-foot hold on that tiny granite surface. The **Footloose Forester** jumped in place and switched feet and hands simultaneously, leaving his left side free to reach for the boulder that was above him to his left. When he was satisfied that he could leap high enough to grasp the boulder above him, the next questions were whether he could hold fast to the boulder, sitting so precariously at the lip of the talus slope; and whether the boulder would hold his weight. As the rain began to intensify slightly, he knew that it was a case of jump up and live; or tumble down with the boulder to a stony impact a thousand feet below. The decision did not take too long.

With another short prayer flashing through his head, the **Footloose Forester** jumped upward to clasp the boulder and quickly swung his legs to the left to gain purchase on top of the boulder. As he did, the boulder moved but did not dislodge. Once he was on top of the boulder he scrambled upward in the scree of talus just beyond the unstable boulder. He knew then that he was going to live. Getting up the steep

face on the west side of the concave bowl looked difficult but it was not. A long section of fissured rock led right to the top of the ridge. Luckily, he made it to the restaurant at the pinnacle of the Zugspitze before dark and was able to enjoy the scenery as he relaxed in the warm security of the last cable car of the day, as it descended back down to Eibsee.



The choke point was just above the circular patch of snow in the right-center of this photo, taken 50 years later

Anyone interested in making a virtual climb of Zugspitze for themselves should first install the Google Earth program on their computer and choose a starting point close to the marked point of impasse at N 47° 26' 34.35" and E 10° 58' 19.87" where the 400-pound boulder once lay balanced at the edge. In all likelihood, it has long ago been swept down the mountain in an avalanche, so can no longer be seen on the satellite photos of the northern face of Zugspitze. Gone also is all but the skeleton of a large hanging glacier that once formed below the restaurant at the summit and carried its load of snow and ice in a westerly direction. Today only the path of the glacier is discernible, marked by a small, extant tarn lake.



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## TDY

Getting out of the house once in a while is a desire that resembles an itch. Most people get that itch to travel on occasion, and soldiers confined to military bases are no different. With the **Footloose Forester**, the desire to be *On the road...again!* was a veritable rash. There were plenty of opportunities during the year to get off the base, even if it meant deploying on maneuvers to one of the forests surrounding our missile battalion headquarters at Fliegerhorst Kaserne near Langendiebach, Germany.

We traveled by road as operational packets; each unit with the equipment and supplies needed to set up and function day or night in the forest. Our Corporal Missile Battalion had dozens of trucks to haul our complicated weapon system. And it was indeed a system that required dozens of people and all that equipment just to mock-fire a single missile.

Other soldiers didn't seem to mind the maneuvers, especially in the spring and summer months, but dreaded being out in the cold in the dead of winter. But when it came to firing a live warhead, every unit of 1<sup>st</sup> Missile Battalion, 39<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery was deployed on Temporary Duty (TDY) to the Hebrides Islands off the coast of Scotland. As an ally in NATO, Scotland provided us with a firing range facing the North Atlantic. Every unit deployed, except the Special Weapons unit to which the **Footloose Forester** belonged. The other units were going to fire a dummy warhead, but we had to stay back with the live warheads stored in an ammunition bunker on base in Germany.

Our opportunity to travel off base for training of the Special Weapons personnel was a TDY assignment to the Bavarian Alps. After World War II the US Army retained operational control of several military

bases in Europe and the one at Garmisch-Partenkirchen was one of them. We Special Weapons personnel went there for training that involved only the warheads.

For whatever reason, the **Footloose Forester** was not on base at Fliegerhorst Kaserne when it came time to make the 470 km road trip to Garmisch with his Special Weapons colleagues. But the Company Commander had a solution. He would treat the **Footloose Forester** like an adult and permit him to travel alone by train and arrange for someone from the base to pick him up at the Garmisch train station. And there were a couple of travel restrictions.

Although the rest of his small Special Weapons unit made the road trip in US Army uniforms and traveled in an Army vehicle, the **Footloose Forester** was asked to travel in civilian attire because the Germans got nervous when they saw a solitary US soldier carrying an M-14 rifle; and as a soldier, he was required to take his weapon with him.

He had a nice but cheap green suit that was clearly of German design; and the green silk tie that he bought in Hanau was a match that was good enough to temporarily fool some Germans into thinking that he was German. So, the **Footloose Forester** was wearing that green suit when he bought his train ticket at the Hanau train station and boarded with his M-14 rifle in plain sight. Needless to say, the loaded magazine was removed and stowed in his duffel bag, another of the travel restrictions for his unaccompanied TDY. The pleasant train trip to Garmisch was memorable because there was full sunshine the whole day and nobody was upset that one of the passengers on the train sat with his M-14 braced between his legs.

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## FRUIT OF THE LOOM LOGOS WERE POPULAR IN PARIS IN 1963

“Montmartre, 1963”



Joe Pellek Enjoyed Watching The Parisians From His Table At The Right

Once again, thanks to the Internet and the power of sharing photos attached to e-mail messages; and those found on web pages, the **Footloose Forester** was able to recapture more memories of the Montmartre District of Paris, France. In 1963 when he was enjoying a 3-day pass with Brother Joe Pellek, the **Footloose Forester** sat with him at one of the tables (on the right) shown in the restaurant depicted in the photo. There was no mistaking the restaurant and no mistake about the logical decision of the present restaurant owners to put those tables where they are shown in the photo, taken perhaps 50 years later. It was also during one of those short-lived fads when the French were fond of wearing T-shirts with Fruit of the Loom logos. We had fun counting how many Fruit of the Loom logos we saw as we sat there enjoying our lunch.



Airman Pellek

The charming streets of Montmartre have as much appeal now as they did then. Anyone walking those streets will be drawn to that intersection and that particular restaurant on Rue Norvin, just as naturally as a mouse is drawn to a trap holding a tasty treat. Our good fortune back in 1963 was having our choice of seats. As a pragmatist, the **Footloose Forester** suspects that the tables and chairs are not now the same ones we occupied in 1963. But the street is the same, the restaurant Le Consulat is the same, and the memory is unaltered.

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## IN FLANDERS FIELDS THE POPPIES GROW

Of the many poems that haunted his imagination from grammar school, the one about a field of poppies in Ypres, Belgium had enough staying power to remain as a fragment in his memory for his entire life. Such is the power of poetry. Ironically, the imagery of a velvet carpet of red poppies was not about flowers, it was about gravestones; the white crosses that marked the graves of soldiers who had fallen in battle.

In Flanders fields the poppies blow,  
Between the crosses, row on row

Over the years the real meaning of the poem has been obscured, indeed the **Footloose Forester** never committed the entire poem to memory. But the imagery of an entire field of red poppies swaying gently in the wind never evaporated. As it turns out, some fifteen years later he would see more than one field filled edge to edge with red poppies. Needless to say, it immediately conjured up the 1915 poem about Flanders fields. Truth is stranger than fiction.

Like so many memories that are no more than passing flashes of reverie, the image of poppies in a poem was reinforced by the sight of real poppies in the sunny springtime hills of Italy. It was always an open question why farmers would choose to plant such large expanses of common poppies, but they do. Joyfully, there they were, a marvelous sight to see and a privilege to behold. The scene will forever remain in his memory.

A secondary memory that cements the occasion is linked to his brother Joe. We were driving to Rome in a Volkswagen Squareback wagon that the **Footloose Forester** had purchased in Frankfurt, Germany earlier that spring. After a stop at a Mom and Pop store near Pisa to buy lunchmeat, cheese, and fresh

bread we continued singing our way south into the warm sunshine of the Italian countryside. Perhaps something didn't agree with Joe because as we were winding our way past one, then another, field of bright red poppies...Joe demanded that we stop the car. He had to take a crap so urgently that it could not wait. So, there we were, surrounded by field after field of velvety red poppies that Joe was about to visit in a very personal way. Fortunately, traffic was very light and nobody saw him alight into the field and beyond the crest of a small hill where he could not be seen by passing traffic. Yes, truth is stranger than fiction. On that day, in the warmth of the spring sunshine of West Central Italy, Joe Pellek marked the occasion in a field of bright red poppies, gently blowing in the wind.

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## OPEN AIR MARKETS IN LAOS ARE EXOTIC

Laos is as exotic a country as most people will ever visit. In the 1960s when the **Footloose Forester** first visited, the market place reeked of the distinctive smell of marijuana in the morning; because it was the only place he knew where the open sale of Cannabis was legal. So, you could smell burning pot from far off, and then buy it by the pile or by the kilo from vendors in open market who were willing to bargain. Not that the **Footloose Forester** was really that interested in staying stoned with a foul smelling, habit forming drug that produces a zombie-like state. The **Footloose Forester** new a thing or two about Thai Stick, but it definitely was refreshing to know that at least one country in the world was liberal enough to allow people to make their own mistakes. Of course, that was many years ago and external political pressures surely have changed the attitudes of Lao politicians who now have a communistic viewpoint and so may want positive world opinion about them.

The trip to and from Laos was indeed a memorable one. Hitch a couple of rides from Bangkok (one long ride was on a loaded log truck) to the banks of the Mekong River, just beyond the Thai Customs Station; and then wait for a one-man water taxi to take you across the river. Once on the other side, the **Footloose Forester** went straight to the Lao Customs Station. Though it was high noon, there was nobody at customs. So, the **Footloose Forester** walked a half-mile downstream to the nearest tea stall, looking for someone in an official looking uniform. Nobody like that at the tea stall, so he walked back to the small and isolated shed that was the Lao Customs Station. Still nobody showed up, so the **Footloose Forester** shrugged his shoulders (and maybe made a few complimentary remarks about Lao security) and started up the dirt road to Vientiane. Eventually someone in an old truck stopped and picked him up and later deposited him in the middle of the capital city.

The overnight stay was uneventful but **Footloose Forester** remembers that the floors, walls and everything else at his humble hotel was made of unvarnished wood. The return south to Thailand was a repeat of the unknown and probably illegal entrance into Laos. It meant going to the same customs station on the banks of the Mekong, and again finding nobody present. So **Footloose Forester** did what he had learned to do in the early years of his travels; he shrugged his shoulders (and blew a few choice comments at the clouds) and proceeded to exit Laos the same way he came in-- unseen by the authorities. So, there was nothing in his passport to indicate that he had ever hitchhiked to and from Vientiane or had even been in Laos. It was the first time he played cat and mouse with immigration officials, but it was not the last time. That would come years later in West Africa in places where the borders were not marked.



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## OVERNIGHT IN RANGOON

In the mid-1960s the military controlled government of Burma was run by a cabal of high ranking officers who were quite unfriendly to outsiders, especially Westerners. Thus, anybody passing through Burma on their way to Bangkok or Hong Kong was allowed to stay no more than 24 hours; and had transit status as passengers. No visa was required to enter and to leave under transit status, but there was not much flexibility to see the sights, either. That put a cramp in the style of the **Footloose Forester** who always wanted to see as much countryside as time allowed. To make things worse, our plane had arrived from Calcutta after 10:00Pm, and was scheduled to depart for Bangkok at 06:30Am the next morning. Not much time to see the sights in Rangoon after a late dinner at the hotel where we transit passengers were assigned. It was nearly midnight before we finished dinner.

The spectacular golden dome of the Sule Pagoda in Rangoon was on the personal bucket list of a fretting **Footloose Forester** who realized that there was only one way to tick off a visitation to one of the world's greatest temples. He had to walk—after midnight.

As he set off alone from the hotel at a few minutes after midnight, **Footloose Forester** first made sure that he left his wallet, watch, and cash in his hotel room; and made sure he could get back into the hotel on his own. Many hotels closed their main doors after 10PM or so, thus getting back in on your own was not always a given. This hotel didn't have such a policy, so he set off in the dark, without a map. Luckily, he had sat in a window seat on the plane on arrival and was able to see the glimmer of gold in the bright moonlight of a nearly full moon as we passed overhead the nearby Sule Pagoda on our approach. He sat in a seat on the right side of the plane and, fortunately the temple was underneath, on his side.

At that time, he didn't know the name of the 2500-year-old pagoda whose dome was covered in gold leaf, but a simple word search done decades later took care of that important detail.

There was little hesitation as he emerged from the hotel and turned left. **Footloose Forester** knew that he had about a dozen blocks to walk into the direction of the temple, but he knew there would be a course correction in his plan as he got close. The streets were deserted. He was counting on that because he didn't know what attitude any potential thief might assume, if he came across one. His luck held up as he got close; he saw the golden dome more clearly as it gleamed in the moonlight. When he approached, he was more cautious regarding the possible presence of beggars, who often made temples, churches and pagodas their nighttime residence. There were none, thus after taking a few minutes to walk around the pagoda to thrill at its architecture in the moonlight, the **Footloose Forester** contentedly walked back to the hotel to catch a few hours of sleep before departing for Bangkok.

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## LITTERING FOR A CAUSE

Some people overtly proclaim their concerns about conservation, environmental awareness, and anti-littering. Others practice low key conservation and likely are just as effective, or ineffective, as the circumstances permit. The **Footloose Forester** belonged in the second group of conservationists who consciously practiced litter control, recycling and overall conservation of natural resources without fanfare but always with awareness. Ironically, sometimes the recycling and conservation of natural resources appeared to be littering. His past history of conservation practices needs some explanation.

When he was a Recreation Patrolman on the El Dorado National Forest in California, the **Footloose Forester** was responsible for trash collection as part of his duties at the Wrights Lake Campground in the high Sierras. He was also indirectly responsible for maintaining the pristine appearance of the roadways and trails in and around Wrights Lake; and the hiking trails that radiated out for miles in every direction from his base of operations. When summer rolled around, hauling trash became a priority duty of the **Footloose Forester** who also answered to the title of Campground Manager or Park Ranger.

Litter control and recycling at Wrights Lake by way of trash collection was mostly confined to summer months because the road into the high Sierra campground didn't open up until the snow melted in late May or early June. When the road opened up, the campers, picnickers, and hikers showed up. Alas, during recent decades of global warming, there was no way to predict just when the road might open. The US Forest Service that maintained the campground didn't take pains to force the issue—when the road was passable word got around, and when it was impassable that word also got around. At 6,700 feet above sea level, Wrights Lake was truly alpine in many respects, and heavy snowfall was not the least of the restrictions to seasonal access.

During the seasonally busy summertime when the campgrounds and popular picnic ground swelled to capacity and beyond, hauling trash was a twice weekly routine and he had a pick-up truck to make the short hauls to an open dump site fairly convenient. But when he went by foot along the trails and miles away from the campground, he had to stuff whatever garbage and other trash he spotted into his backpack or into his pockets. Mostly it was an occasional candy wrapper discarded by an unthinking youngster not yet attuned to the taboo of littering, or a food label that did not get disposed of properly by hikers. Burying empty food tins deep enough to discourage animals that are attracted to the smell was usually good enough to keep hiking trails and scenic stops free of visible debris, and it was accepted practice. Unfortunately, not everyone was diligent enough to erase the marks of their presence, so the **Footloose Forester** made periodic patrols along hiking routes to police whatever he found there.

The trash from trails that he carried back got dumped into an open trench that served the Wrights Lake Campground, along with the twice weekly haul from the 40+ camping sites and large picnic area. It was more pleasant to think of the open trench as a trash dump, but when the campground got full, the haul sometimes contained mushy, smelly garbage.

A neighborhood black bear regularly visited the garbage dump when the odor of food enticed him in. He was part of the natural recycling process so was not unwelcomed, except when he tore apart the heavy paper trash bags looking for food inside. On one occasion when the **Footloose Forester** snuck up on him at sunset, the bear was seen standing on his rear legs with his head completely inside a paper trash bag. He was shaking food particles from the bottom of the bag by lifting the bag over his head. It was a hilarious sight, so much so that when the bear heard the **Footloose Forester** laughing out loud, he lowered himself to all fours and scampered away. Although most times he ripped the bags apart with his claws, he did not make much of a mess inside the wide trench; besides he was content to eat his snacks on site and did not cart food filled bags away from the area. Looking back, picking up litter and hauling the garbage were acts of maintaining the natural beauty of the area and controlling pollution; and the bear helped to recycle the food resources, lest they go to waste.

With recycling on his mind, the **Footloose Forester** adopted a routine that he practiced for many years hence. Conservation of some selected items to later recycle became part of his personal environmental ethic but was done without discussing with others why he did it. Put bluntly, he littered the highways in Cape Verde and in Haiti with food wastes that he conserved at one stage and recycled at a later stage.

The process went like this: he often carried bananas in his pick-up truck as a quick snack, or even as the only lunch that he might find in small village markets. Bananas were usually plentiful, cheap, and convenient. After eating a banana while driving, the **Footloose Forester** saved the skins to feed the domestic animals that he knew he would see along the road. There were always a few goats at some point along the roads in Cape Verde and he was amazed that when you tossed out a banana peel, they descended on it just as soon as they saw it. It never failed, the banana peels were devoured within seconds. When there were no goats on the open road, he saved the banana peels for the goats owned by a handful of villagers whose houses were close to the road. Oftentimes the goats saw him coming.

In Haiti the goats seemed just as hungry and they immediately went for the banana peels just as soon as they saw them. In addition, the occasional pig that was seen along the roadways in Haiti also seemed to be fond of banana peels. They also ate mango peels, so the **Footloose Forester** saved the peels of his occasional mango. In fact, mangoes constituted a large part of the normal diet of pigs in Haiti because there were lots of mango trees in Haiti. The **Footloose Forester** practiced recycling of natural resources by recycling his garbage. And the goats and the pigs were happy.

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## BAMBOO THAT WAS OVER 100 FEET TALL

C was Ceylon

You might say that he was never in Sri Lanka, but he was in Ceylon. He was never in Kampuchea but was once in the Khmer temples of Cambodia; he never set foot in Myanmar but passed through Burma; never was in Dacca, Bangladesh but spent time in Dacca, East Pakistan. The world changes, even when we don't want it to.

Ceylon was a former British colony that had many of the reminders of British rule but mostly the **Footloose Forester** remembers it as a tropical island where there are so many coconut trees that the smell of coconut cooking oil fills the air. It is so pervasive that you could hardly find a place where the sweet scent of coconut was not all around.



Giant bamboo that is considerably smaller than what was measured in Ceylon

Getting to Ceylon was an adventure. One way was by ferry from the Indian port of Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu State. You passed through Indian customs in a large shed built on sand, with only sand for a floor. The inspection benches were perched on posts driven into the sand. Beyond customs, you embarked on a small “lighter” that would take you to the steamer waiting in deeper water. The lighter hoisted its sails and you sailed silently for about 20 minutes toward the steamer that served as a ferry boat, but without the capability to board cars and trucks. After about three hours, is seemed, you reached the coast of Ceylon. Conveniently, there was a railroad terminal adjacent to the dock at Talaimannar Pier, the Ceylonese port of entry. Once the ferry was discharged, the train departed for points south. There was no apparent reason to wait for a different departure time, since the port of entry was the last point of land along the train tracks, and everybody in that coastal region could see the ferry coming for miles.

The **Footloose Forester** took a side trip inland. He took a bus or two to the highland city of Kandy where he was welcomed with the sight of an elephant doing his chores as a forestry worker. The people respect the elephants because they could do things that people could not do, but they had to be trained to work in the woods. Along the way, he stopped in a small village and was given the present of a kilo of Ceylon tea, some of the best in the world. The people were proud of their tea and were friendly enough to invite him into their homes. Those kinds of memories stick.

At some point he also did some hitch hiking, just because he wanted to add to the memories. He spied a thick stand of bamboo and asked the driver to stop a mile or so before the village he could see nestled in the hills above him. He sensed that it was an opportunity that may not come again, and a chance to inspect a grove of the tallest bamboo “trees” he had ever seen. Did you ever see a grass grow to the height of well over 100 feet tall, and to a diameter of 18 inches? In that place, and on that day, the **Footloose Forester** did.

His method of checking tree diameter was to reach around a tree and touch his fingertips together. If his fingers just touched, the tree was 18 inches in diameter. He measured height in 16-foot log units, as he had done for years when cruising timber as a practicing forester. Yes, years later it still seemed questionable that his estimate of the tallest bamboo was really 130 feet, but he had lots of experience with hypsometers, clinometers and Abney levels for obtaining heights after which he then checked by eyeball estimates. In practice, however, the process was usually reversed: you start with the instrument readings and then test your personal estimates to establish confidence and develop your skills for those many times when you did not have an instrument. Thus, those numbers of giant bamboo in Ceylon stick in his memory. Only after he was satisfied that he had captured one more precious memory, did he walk the last two miles to the village and later accept a kilo of Ceylonese tea as a gift.



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## TEA PLANTS ON THE CASPIAN SHORE

### I for Iran

Some of the nastiest tasting tea in the world can be sipped on the shores of the Caspian Sea, right where the tea bushes grow. Of course, the Iranians are proud of their tea and their tea plantations. Good thing they serve it with a cube of sugar on the saucer. They expect you to put the cube in your mouth, and then sip the tea, like they themselves drink it. When in Rome, do as the Romans do, goes the old expression. **Footloose Forester** happily took the advice of his friend Rick TenCate and sipped his tea+sugar, with the whole cube under his lip, so did not gag or spit the vile Iranian tea out in the presence of Rick's colleagues.

Peace Corps trainers called such events as "displaying cultural sensitivity" and their admonitions were quite apt, in this case. Of course, **Footloose Forester** also had to smile and acknowledge that having fresh tea within sight of the tea plantation was a unique experience.

On the other hand, eating caviar spooned over a bed of rice and a strip fillet was a gem of a memory. The caviar also came from the nearby Caspian Sea and was so common (in season) in the restaurants in Teheran that Rick and Footloose enjoyed their delicious meal in a rather non-descript hole-in-the-wall place where working people ate their meals.

Rick TenCate was a Peace Corps Volunteer with whom **Footloose Forester** had worked in California. Going to see Rick at his duty station along the Caspian was on the agenda just as soon as **Footloose Forester** was able to get his visa approved. Getting to Rick's town north of Teheran by bus was, however, and not a sure thing. Iran was in the midst of a cholera outbreak at the time and the health authorities imposed a quarantine in the region of the outbreak, including the bus route taken by the **Footloose Forester**. For whatever reason, when they stopped our bus and checked us out, they let us proceed without asking any questions; or even checking our papers.

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## HOW DID THE SURVEYING TEACHER KNOW WHERE THE CANBERRA BOMBER WAS HEADED?

### A Practical Lesson in Compass Reading

Being around the action in Viet Nam for almost three years led to plenty of predictable moments of violence. But some of the earlier and later encounters were not expected. Take for example, the Peace Corps service of the **Footloose Forester** in Pakistan. At a time when Pakistan was composed of the provinces of West Pakistan and East Pakistan, separated by 1000 miles of the Republic of India, none of us could know how the peace and calm of the desert would turn into a war zone.

In 1965 India and Pakistan engaged in a brief war precipitated by the presumption of cross-border incursions by India into the Rann of Kutch, a Pakistani desert area on the border that might contain oil deposits. Since the ensuing 10-day war is now a distant memory, so is the talk of oil in the Rann of Kutch. For the **Footloose Forester**, the only clear memory of the war occurred one clear midnight in Bahawalpur, the large village of his Peace Corps assignment in West Pakistan.

Through the silent desert air, the sound of a single airplane kept getting louder. He ran outside into the courtyard to catch a glimpse above the nine-foot walls of his compound. When it passed over his house, he noted the spot on the wall where it first appeared, then turned to see the spot on the opposite wall where it passed by. It was a twin-engine RB-66, or Canberra bomber. **Footloose Forester** had seen whole squadrons of them lined up along the runways at two U.S. air bases in Morocco, so there was no mistake. Besides, it was only about 300 feet up, to keep under Pakistani radar.

Then he hurried into his house and dug out his compass and a map of the area, which included our position in Bahawalpur, and the border area of India and Pakistan. Using the compass, he sighted on the wall to determine the azimuth from which the bomber had appeared, and then, turning around, he noted the azimuth of the direction of flight. Inside the house, he then aligned the compass and the map on the floor and drew a line from Bahawalpur back to the source azimuth and another line from Bahawalpur to the destination, based on the forward azimuth.

Within a few minutes he knew that the plane had come from Jodhpur Air Base in India, and it was heading to Multan Air Base in Pakistan. A few hours later when **Footloose Forester** arrived at the classroom to teach his 65 students of forestry surveying, he had his compass and map along. It was probably the only classroom lecture in which they paid full attention.

First, he asked them what they knew about the plane that had flown overhead after mid-night... what it was?... and where they thought it was going? and where did it come from? Then he reminded them of the lesson on re-section we had covered the previous week--the process of using a compass to sight on an objective, then drawing a straight line on a map in the opposite direction. They lit up with interest as he told them he had the answers before the bomber reached its destination.

The students all knew that Multan Air Base was bombed (only a few cows near the runway were killed) because it was announced on the early morning radio broadcast. But they were all surprised to know that the bomber came from Jodhpur Air Base in India. From that day on, if not before, the **Footloose Forester** was suspected of being a CIA agent working for the other side. Oh yes, before he showed them the map of the azimuth lines leading from Jodhpur to Multan and directly over us in Bahawalpur, the **Footloose Forester** snipped off the margins of the U.S. Air Force map that had been provided to him by the Peace Corps, not the CIA.

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## BACKPACKING IN ASIA

### BACKPACKERS PART I

As the two-year Peace Corps assignment in Pakistan was coming to an end, the Peace Corps Representative in Lahore began setting up the details for a return flight to the USA for a restless **Footloose Forester**. Somewhere along the way, however, the restless one learned that it was permissible to accept his termination in Pakistan and be on his own. With a modest severance check for some forgotten amount and an airline travel voucher valid for at least a year, the options for striking out from Lahore seemed pretty doable. He wanted to go east and eventually complete the circle of the globe. The biggest adventure of his life was about to begin.

This dream-induced chronicle is more about the other travelers he met on the way, and less about the **Footloose Forester** who mostly wants to play the role of observer and narrator. As usual, the characters he met came along unexpectedly and went away without notice, but they were real at the time. And some of the events were quite memorable. Take for example, the short episode with Sven, a Swede who had his own Volkswagen bug in India. Sven and the **Footloose Forester** met at the YMCA in Bombay. We shared a large room with another traveler from Great Britain. We all stayed there because rent was cheap but also because such places are meeting grounds for backpackers and hitchhikers who have similar interests when it comes to seeing the world on a skinny budget. It turns out that the Brit was despondent because he was going broke and reluctantly agreed to turn in his passport in return for repatriation to the UK. Brits always had that option, so it was a back-up plan when they set out as backpackers. After the Brit left to surrender his passport at the British Consulate, Sven and the **Footloose Forester** turned their

attention to the next move. Sven wanted to know if Footloose was interested in joining him in driving across India. Yes, was the answer, and we set off the next day.

Sven didn't talk too much, but that didn't matter except to explain what eventually happened. We spent the next night at an Indian Railways guest house, one of the options known by backpackers as the type of place for cheap, clean lodging. It cost us 10 rupees, the equivalent of a single dollar. By agreement, Footloose paid for the first night, and Sven would pay the second night, and so on; until we reached our destination. At the end of the second travel day and lacking the YMCA of a major city like Bombay, we settled for the Forest Department rest house in a small city with a name so long it cannot be pronounced. Oh, the **Footloose Forester** forgot to mention: that in addition to taking turns paying the rent; we agreed to take turns sleeping in the bed, in case there was only one bed.

One bed in a government rest house was the normal expectation. Footloose had slept on the floor the first night, so it was his turn to sleep in the bed at the Forest Department rest house. With his tiny VW bug parked outside, Sven made himself comfortable on the floor. At about 1:00AM, Footloose was awakened when a huge rat crawled up his side and bit him on the left ear. He jumped up to barely catch the sight of the fleeing rat in the pale light coming into the window from outside. "Sven, Sven, he said "a rat just bit me on the ear." Sven said nothing and just rolled over and went back to sleep. About an hour later, and after Footloose had again dozed off, he felt the rat bite him on his big toe. Again, he jumped up and with alarm in his voice, Footloose said, "Sven, that rat just bit me on the big toe." Once again, Sven said not a word. He simply got up, bundled his clothes into a ball and went outside to sleep in the back of his VW. The **Footloose Forester** then bundled up his own sheets and pillow and spent the rest of the night sleeping on top of the table.

## BACKPACKERS PART II

Separating out the backpackers from the straight travelers who chose to see the world on a shoestring was not always obvious. Both groups could be found staying at the YMCA in big cities, or in youth hostels, or in government-run rest houses; or finally and obviously, in cheap hotels that might conjure up images of flop houses. Adventurous travelers came in all sizes, nationalities and of both sexes. They also came in a surprising range of ages. Usually when you ran into one they didn't talk of going home, they talked

of moving on. Some were clean cut and sounded intelligent; others looked and acted suspiciously. You sized one another up before you decided whether or not to link up.

One of the more interesting characters that **Footloose Forester** remembers clearly was a Polish refugee who, after World War II, emigrated to Australia. He was also a smuggler, by his own admission. We met at one of those low budget hotels in the south of India as we waited for the ferry to take us to Ceylon. He did not hesitate in telling the **Footloose Forester** that he usually made two trips a year: Australia to India with some form of contraband, and where he exchanged it or bought cut diamonds; India to Ceylon with the diamonds, and then to exchange them in Ceylon for emeralds. He said he did that because diamonds were cheap in India but expensive in Ceylon; on the other hand, emeralds were cheap in Ceylon but expensive in Bangkok, his next stop. After he exchanged the emeralds in Bangkok for gold, he went on to Hong Kong where gold was expensive. He claimed that he made about a 25% profit on each exchange and lived on the mark-up. Surprisingly, he then took out a small manila envelope and showed **Footloose Forester** the diamonds bound for Ceylon. A small pile of cut diamonds sparkling in the sunlight is one of the more vivid memories of our first encounter. He said they were worth about \$10,000.

We parted ways in Ceylon but each of us had Bangkok as a destination, so we thought that we might be crossing paths again. Travel routes were somewhat limited by a handful of airlines flying to only a few major cities, and on schedules that did not always allow for daily departures. Thus, the second encounter with the Pole was in Rangoon, Burma as we disembarked from the flight out of Calcutta.

He was preoccupied with a couple of good looking gals who were returning home after their years of posting with their respective embassies in Nepal. The American gal was taking the long way home, via Hong Kong; and the Australian gal was flying directly home after a short detour to Bangkok. The **Footloose Forester** learned those details as we all sat around a communal dinner table in Rangoon. Air India made such arrangements as hotel accommodations and group meals on the ground at intermediate stops, because the Burmese authorities did not allow travelers to stay more than 24 hours, and we had to remain in transit status. Even the low budget backpackers had to transit Burma by air but had their hotel room and meals paid by the airline. So, although we nodded to each other across the huge dining room table, the **Footloose Forester** and the Pole did not speak to one another until we reached Bangkok.

It was in Bangkok that the **Footloose Forester** learned what happened to the Pole in Ceylon. But that was only after a couple of days and after the Chinese drug merchants, the Pole's new employers,

left the lunch table at the Thai Song Greet Hotel. The Pole, perhaps by way of explaining why he was temporarily shilling drugs for Bangkok pharmacists (he was broke), unabashedly admitted that he got caught at Ceylonese customs on his way back to India. He had successfully exchanged the diamonds for emeralds, but because they also asked to see his currency declaration form (he did not have one); and then asked how much money he exchanged, he was in a jam. He told them he didn't change any money. So, they searched him and found the emeralds in his knotted handkerchief. Finally, they asked.... and the **Footloose Forester** just didn't make this stuff up.... how much he thought the emeralds were worth. He said about \$20,000. "If you don't want to go to jail," they said, "you can pay a fine and be on your way. The fine is going to be \$20,000."

## BACKPACKERS PART III

Writing seminal chronicles without an outline, without a clear chronology, and in the "stream of consciousness" mode has always been a problem. It has been hard enough putting the stories together, given the fact that they come from memory and not from a diary. This admission is a reminder about why the **Footloose Forester** could never, in his own mind, sort out the various stories about traveling in India and points east. He traveled west to east in India two or three times, but only once by land; and west to east by rail only once. The problem is he cannot sort out which of the stories are about the backpackers, and which ones included his friends and fellow Peace Corps Volunteers Jerry Jensen and John Harper. Backpackers, Part III, therefore, is one last attempt to get the memories straight.

First, there are the glimmers of recollection with Jerry and John in New Delhi; then in Amritsar to visit the ancient Golden Temple, spiritual home of the Sikh religion; and of standing at the Gateway to India port landing in Bombay, with the spectacular Taj President hotel within sight. That was where, among other hotels, Islamic terrorists mounted a bloody attack in November 2008 and killed 168 people, then held the military and police at bay for several days. And, of course, there was the precious memory of seeing the Taj Mahal in moonlight. We were also lucky enough to have a full moon. Reading the Arabic inscriptions on the outer walls of the Taj, in the pale moonlight, made for one of those mental photos that gets stored away forever.

This chronicle, however, is a last-ditch attempt to finish the story about some of the colorful backpackers who **Footloose Forester** encountered in his travels. In Part II, the Polish smuggler came on the scene.



That was at Rameshwaram, India where the ferry to Ceylon attracted other backpackers. One of the other travelers was a Brit who was traveling with his British friend. We didn't hook up, but **Footloose Forester** nevertheless remembers an incident as we gathered in the customs shed prior to embarking. The customs inspector asked, quite brusquely, what the Brit had in his (military) duffel bag. The young, wiseguy Brit replied, "In the bottom of this bag, I have two bars of gold." Without cracking a smile, the customs inspector then said, "Please take everything out of the bag." Amid grumbling under his breath, the Brit complied—everything went onto the inspection bench. When he was finished, the customs inspector said, again without cracking a smile, "I don't see any gold bars. Now you can put it all back. And next time, don't be such a wiseguy." That not so brief encounter belongs in the "you can't make this stuff up" department of memories. At the time, the **Footloose Forester** admired the customs inspector for his professionalism and especially how he chose to make his point.

The Pole was a colorful character, alright, but **Footloose Forester** doesn't remember his name and didn't really care to know or want to get too close to him. Although we may have caught glimpses of each other at customs in Ceylon, or in the waiting line for the airplane in Calcutta, or at the communal dinner table in Rangoon; the **Footloose Forester** was burning with curiosity about why the Pole was having lunch with two Chinese merchants in Bangkok. For whatever reason that the Pole talked freely about his shady activities, he did not shy away from people. He invited the **Footloose Forester** to join him as a drug pitchman for the Chinese. He explained that all you had to do was accompany the drug merchants up-country and speak to prospective buyers in your native language, make some hand gestures like pointing to their products; and then let the Chinese merchants do the translating into Thai. He said that the Chinese actually paid him well. The drug trade was presumably legit, but the difference was that (he claimed) the up-country buyers would readily negotiate with a foreigner whom they believed was honest and more credible than the local Thai Chinese. The **Footloose Forester** declined to join in that venture; he thought that the whole thing was shady.

There were other genuine characters that came and went through the doors of the Thai Song Greet Hotel in Bangkok. The name of the hotel, itself, was one that the **Footloose Forester** heard in more than one place in India because it was touted as a real backpacker's kind of place. Good, cheap food, cheap rent, clean rooms, and lots of companionship (local or the backpacking kind) any time of day or night. You might say that the Thai Song Greet was a magnet for low-budget travelers with common interests. It was not uncommon to see two or three small groups of travelers sitting in the restaurant at lunch, and again

at dinner. The camaraderie was not unexpected; everyone had travel stories to tell, and each backpacker was willing to share tips on where to go on the cheap, what to eat and what not to eat.

The first time that Footloose saw the front entrance to the Thai Song Greet Hotel, there was a bicycle chained to a lamppost directly in front of the door. It belonged to a Swiss traveler who was making his second trip around the world—by bicycle. When you saw him, a burly guy in his 50s, you could easily believe that claim. He was a loner but readily fit the stereotype of a traveler, not a tourist. Another traveler whom Footloose encountered at the Thai Song Greet was a Frenchman who was heading for Hanoi. He was an engineer and a revolutionary who was going to offer his services in fighting the Americans by helping the North Vietnamese build bridges along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, or so he claimed. The **Footloose Forester** did not doubt his word, so passionately did the Frenchman explain his plans.

*A to Z Word Potpourri*  
*Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams*  
*Chronicles of a Footloose Forester*  
*By Dick Pellek*

## ON GETTING ARRESTED

This chronicle comes so many years after the fact, that the **Footloose Forester** was not sure that he would ever write it into his memoirs. At the time, and for many years afterward, he could not decide whether relating the story to anyone at all would come across as an angry outburst, as a disingenuous excuse, as a screed, or as a gratuitous version of what happened to him in Pakistan.

The other issue in crafting a chronicle entry about life “*On the road....again!!!*” was simply about whether to file it under dreams or nightmares in the Truth is Stranger Than Fiction folder; or in the You Just Can’t Make This Stuff Up folder. Additionally, whether the subject matter should be listed under the category Legacy Story, Inspiration, Close Calls, or elsewhere? A good filing system helps to recall and to retrieve things, even bad memories.

Anyway, getting down to cases.... the **Footloose Forester** got arrested when he was in Pakistan. He was a Peace Corps Volunteer who was originally assigned in the desert town of Bahawalpur on the southern border of Punjab Province, just west of the Cholistan Desert and just north of the Sind Desert. As visitors to Pakistan in a category other than as tourists, we volunteers were required to register with the local police and to sign out and sign back in whenever we traveled outside of our district. It was a big inconvenience, but we were resigned to tolerate that rule.

The biggest nuisance was the size and composition of the travel log that we were required to carry; and to present it to the local police at our destinations. It was a thin fibrous mat of crude, grayish colored paper that was at least 14 inches long and 10 inches wide. The outsized form was designed to accept numerous signatures, covering several trips; and was intended to last as a chronological record. The nuisance factors

(there were several) included the fact that ink from old fashioned fountain pens bled into the porous mat fiber and instantly gave off a smudged and messy appearance. Most of the signatures were recorded with fountain pens; or with even more antiquated quill pens, that were hand-dipped in ink before they dripped onto our travel log. But the biggest nuisance of all was what to do with the outsized form that was just stiff enough that it would not fold neatly.

As the **Footloose Forester** recalls (present tense) the details about those nightmarish episodes, he is reminded why he is convinced that some events in life are hard-wired into our brains. The tale about the Pakistani travel log is one of them, even as it emerges from his memory banks some 49 years later. Thus, it is now speculated, that cumbersome travel log of the **Footloose Forester** got him arrested.

According to the rules, a foreign traveler like the **Footloose Forester** in Pakistan who intended to be absent from his home district more than 24 hours, was required to sign out with the police before departing from town; and to sign in with the police at the intended destination within 24 hours. Upon return, he/she was again required to sign in within 24 hours. That is the simple version of the rule and the routine that was an accepted practice. Now for the first of many twists and turns.

The **Footloose Forester** was on the road dozens of times during his 21 months in Pakistan. Thus, his stiff, ink-stained and over-sized travel log became increasingly dog-eared and wrinkled as it went in and out of his suitcase or duffle bag. When a few of those trips were to the desert and primitive government outposts, he had no choice but to fold the document, just to make it fit into his travel gear. It was not designed to be folded, but there was no possibility that it could ever remain clean and perfectly stiff. One time, and after a trip into the desert during which he used his duffel bag to pack his things, he went to a clerk at the Bahawalpur Police Station and asked for a new travel log form. The **Footloose Forester** even offered to pay the few annas it cost to replace the hand-crafted form. No dice, he was not allowed to replace the form.

Eventually, the story came to a climax when he returned to Bahawalpur from Peshawar, just a week or so before he was planning to leave the country upon completion of his Peace Corps service. He had been transferred to Peshawar some three months earlier; and although he was hoping to go there with a new travel log, or to gain fresh registration status in Peshawar, neither of those options was allowed by the police in Bahawalpur. So, here he was, with three more months of field travel under his belt; and three

more months of smudging and abrading of his already crinkled travel log. But when the Inspector of Police in Bahawalpur was asked to sign off, he got very angry at the appearance of the travel log.

The Inspector of Police, who was in fact an Englishman who attended the same Roman Catholic church as the **Footloose Forester**, did not take pity on the travel worn Peace Corps Volunteer and his ragged looking travel log. Instead, he said that the document was a disgrace; and then told a subordinate to make an arrest. But the story has other twists and turns.

When a hapless **Footloose Forester** complained that he was aware of the shabby appearance of the travel log but was denied the possibility of replacing it at an earlier time, he politely inquired what exactly he was guilty of that warranted his arrest.

It may have been accurate to describe the demeanor of the Inspector of Police as being unsure of himself at that moment, but people in positions of authority do not like to be challenged; thus, he again turned to the subordinate and told him to make a case against the **Footloose Forester**. That case was: Violation of the Registration of Foreigners Rule. Once again, a subdued but cocky **Footloose Forester** challenged the purported violation by asking to see the wording in the legal code of Pakistan.

At this stage, it is prudent to mention that truth is stranger than fiction; and that some things you just can't make up. When a junior clerk escorted the **Footloose Forester** into a small adjacent room, he opened a thickly bound book containing legal codes. There he pointed to the exact wording of the charge relevant to Violation of the Registration of Foreigners Rule.... of the Government of India.

Despite the obvious false arrest because the **Footloose Forester** was not in India, and the legal code used as a basis of his arrest was not procedurally proper, the terms of his arrest and subsequent court appearance went forward. Looking back to 1966, the **Footloose Forester** still sees that page in the legal code regarding the violation of the Registration of Foreigners Rule....and the symbol of the Government of India at the top of the page.

The key to his conviction in court was the exact wording in the Registration of Foreigner's Rule. A traveler, any traveler, was supposed to report within 24 hours. What the rule did not say was whether the 24-hour deadline referred to the time since departure from his last destination (Peshawar, some 800 miles away) or his arrival at his home of records. The **Footloose Forester** reported back into the police station

at Bahawalpur within 12 hours of his return, but it was several days after he left Peshawar, because his passport had been locked up in the safe at the US Consulate office in Lahore. A no-win situation. In any case, he was never going to be able to travel between Peshawar and Bahawalpur and sign in within 24 hours of departure ... if he took poor man transportation. Again, looking back, he remembers that he took the train from Peshawar; transferred to another train in Lahore; disembarked to take the ferry boat on the Sutlej River; switched to a horse-drawn tonga on the outskirts of Bahawalpur; and arrived at his old home town after dark. Checking in with the police early the next morning didn't earn any brownie points.

On the heels of the February 2015 controversy regarding NBC journalist Brian Williams and some disputed facts about an incident in the Iraq War in 2003, it is reasonable to question the veracity of old stories that are widely circulated. Terms like "dissembling" and "mis-remembering" are now part of the Brian Williams controversy. But that was only 12 years ago. So, when the **Footloose Forester** now has the audacity to describe in some detail a series of events that happened 49 years ago, some people might well shake their heads in disbelief. Luckily, or unluckily, the **Footloose Forester** has an official record in his files mentioning his arrest and conviction in Bahawalpur, Pakistan in September of 1966.

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## FACE OF A VC SOLDIER EXPOSED IN A PARACHUTE FLARE

### Uniform or Not, Civilian or Not

Uniform or not, civilian or not, many of us who spent more than a year in Viet Nam saw lots of action of one form or another. There were mortar attacks, rocket attacks, ambushes and, for the civilian **Footloose Forester**, one memorable frontal assault. That was conducted by only a handful of VC who attacked an ARVN (Army of the Republic of Viet Nam) machine gun post next to the house where he was staying on the outskirts of Pleiku, in the Central Highlands. At about 1:30 in the morning, the VC opened up on the machine gun position. His host and PA&E colleague told him to get his weapon and make haste to his personal bunker outside. So, the **Footloose Forester** grabbed his pants and shoes, then the M-14 rifle he had been given by his host the night before. His host had offered him a choice of an AR-15, an M-14, a grenade launcher or a .45 automatic. Since the **Footloose Forester** was able to disassemble and re-assemble the M-14 in the dark and by feel, he chose the weapon he was most familiar with.

We spent only an hour or so in the bunker, and there really wasn't that much firing. The VC always count on surprise but when they didn't take out the machine gun after the first volley, the fearsome .50 caliber raked the positions where the firing came from. The ARVN also used parachute flares to light up the brush and tree line. When it got quiet and it seemed that the attack had ended, a VC soldier stood up to retreat just as a final parachute flare opened to reveal his face. He was directly in the gun sights of the **Footloose Forester** but as the soldier turned to run, the situation changed. Had the **Footloose Forester** chosen to pull the trigger, his bullet would have gotten the VC soldier in the back, only 50 yards away. In an instant, we knew that both of us would live to see another day, so he doesn't regret not shooting a man in the back. On the other hand, if that VC had chosen to advance instead of turn away, he would have pulled that trigger.



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## GETTING AROUND IN HELICOPTERS

Foresters and other natural resources professionals get around in helicopters more often than most folks. Kind of like a businessman or woman taking a taxi to get to an appointment in a strange city, natural resources specialists frequently rely on rapid, reliable transportation to get to their job sites in remote places where there is no landing strip for fixed-wing aircraft, or even the possibility of landing an airplane there. Helicopters are ideal to meet that need and although they are not always available, it is becoming increasingly clear that in some cases they are indispensable.

Among the hundred or so times that the **Footloose Forester** has flown in a helicopter, nearly all of them were in places where there were no roads; or in war zones where travel by land was dangerous, slow; or both.

Some of the earliest trips aloft in tiny 2 and 3-place helicopters were to fight forest fires in California during the early 1960s. One had to trust the pilot to know how much weight he could lift; and how high he could fly with his cargo of tools and firefighters. It turned out that weight limits were critical, a lesson **Footloose Forester** learned early on when a burly pilot asked two of us would-be passengers how much we weighed before he was willing to take off from the Big Hill helipad in the California foothills. So, he asked each of us before he decided.

The Honey Dripper, the handle of a convict from San Quentin who was on work release as part of a fire fighting team of trustees, told the pilot that he went “about one eighty five”; and the **Footloose Forester** chimed in at 135 pounds. Together with the shovels and fire axes that were strapped to the struts, and with both of us aboard, it was too much as the Bell “bubble cab” copter strained to rise more than 20 feet off

the ground. Honey Dropper was asked to get out and was substituted for with a decidedly skinny convict who weighed around 150 pounds. We made it into the air without further straining the engine and were privileged to have magnificent scenery all the way to the landing site on a ridge line near Rockbound Pass, part of the Desolation Valley Wilderness Area.

Later, on one return trip from the same ridge on the Rockbound Pass trail, we unsuspecting firefighters were alarmed to feel ourselves tipping downward into the valley only a second or two after the landing skids were clear of the rock. The pilot purposefully nosed us downward to get more air speed quickly, since the 9200-foot ridge was already at the upper limits of altitude where the helicopter's lift was minimal.

On another day, and with another pilot, we put down on top of a large rock that put us close to an active fire. Without the helicopter, it would be a hike of several hours through the forest that was so dense that there were no openings to land. Except for a few rock outcrops! That brave pilot put us down on a rock so small that the landing skids, both front and back, extended beyond the rock,

Part of the reverie which features helicopters includes the thrills associated with taking the controls and flying in the foothills above the San Gabriel Range near Fort Ord, California. As a draftee in the US Army, the **Footloose Forester** had applied for helicopter flight school; and was accepted into the early part of the selection process. Part of the candidate selection process included a test flight to see if he had the demeanor, the dexterity, and the nerves to fly on his own, once given basic instructions by the flight instructor sitting beside him. Part of the testing of nerves also included an auto rotation procedure whereby the **Footloose Forester** was instructed to take the H-13 Bell 47 copter up to about 10,000 feet, then to turn off the engine. The instructor watched for emotional responses and signs of panic as the now silent bird fluttered down toward earth. It was all part of the check-list for emotional stability. The **Footloose Forester** passed all the tests but was not selected for flight school because, as a draftee, he already had advanced orders to report elsewhere as part of a scheduled deployment. He would get another chance to take the controls at Fort Sill, Oklahoma; but in the end the order for deployment according to the original plan held sway, and he was off to Germany.

Indeed, most flights in helicopters were in military aircraft during the Viet Nam War. Most were in HU1-B "Hueys" of one description or another. Huey Gunships had one or two M-60 machine guns mounted in the doorways; Huey slicks were designed or assigned to carry cargo, fighting men, or casualties; and Huey MedEvacs were specially painted with large white squares on each side that displayed

the red cross of an airborne ambulance. As a civilian who carried travel orders permitting him to fly on any available aircraft, the **Footloose Forester** logged many dozens of flights in Army and Marine helicopters. Most of the Army birds were Hueys; but the Marines had mostly Ch-47 Chinooks and the Jolly Green Giant HH-3E cargo and troop transport craft that could carry combat teams. Except for the Sky Crane model Ch-54 designed by Sikorsky; and one other model, he flew in most of the helicopter models in the land-based fleet in service during the war.

It would be several years, however, before he flew in the small, fast and relatively new bird designated as the OH-6 Cayuse. At one time he could have included that one, too; while still in Viet Nam but he gave up his seat to another civilian passenger who needed to get back to Saigon from his field assignment at Dong Tam. So **Footloose Forester** stayed another night with the GIs at Dong Tam.

By the way, Dong Tam was a small riverine combat outpost that was carved out of rice paddies in the Mekong Delta lowlands. As you approached Dong Tam from the air, there was nothing but rice paddies on all sides, save for the narrow river entrance for hovercraft for which the base was probably built. In the dry season Dong Tam resembled an artificial desert of baked soil; an island of dust and sooty haze in the middle of a large expanse of emerald green rice fields. Dong Tam was so small that it didn't have a runway for fixed-wing aircraft.

Army helicopters were small enough to be able to see out during the flight over jungles and forest land. As a forester who appreciated the distinction between what constituted jungle and what should be called forest, he always appreciated seeing the magnificent high forest regions in the Central Highlands of Viet Nam, what the military guys called II Corps. At times we flew so low that we could see black-clad soldiers on forest paths below, and in the middle of the day. During one flight, at least two squads were clearly visible, but nobody else in the Huey seemed to notice them, or at least nobody showed any reaction.

The Government of Venezuela made a helicopter available to our team of environmentalists for several flights into the Rio Caparo watershed where they were planning to construct a reservoir for generating electric power for the region. One or two people at a time were dropped off up-river to conduct on-site surveys of conditions; to be picked up late in the day at the appointed hour. It was most helpful to see the length of the impacted watershed zone from the air because part of the task we environmental analysts had was to identify residual islands in the main channel where wildlife would become stranded after the

rising water behind the proposed dam forced them from their normal habitats. On one of those flights the pilot related a hair-raising story.

During the previous month, he said, he was ferrying heavy equipment upstream, suspended from cables under his copter. At one point a gust of wind caused the suspended load to sway so severely that the copter inverted in flight. The pilot was able to right his ship and still not lose the load. He looked and acted the part of a very confident man.

Another incident occurred during a different flight. Two agrostologists (grass specialists) were planning to spend about three days collecting samples in the upper watershed and pointed on a map to the place on the river bank where they wanted to be picked up. The **Footloose Forester** asked them if the river junction we were looking at from the cabin of the helicopter was the place they were referring to on the map. Yes, they said. But the river junction we were looking at was not the place they marked on the map for the pilot. Privately the **Footloose Forester** cautioned the pilot not to refer to the pencil mark on the map, or else he would be flying up the wrong branch of the river and the environmentalists would be wondering why they were not being picked up.

Back to military helicopters; in El Salvador this time, with military pilots but this time around we were not in a war zone. It was the first time that **Footloose Forester** rode in the OH-6 Cayuse, the model he missed as a passenger in Viet Nam. This occasion was on request of an official from the Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganadería. The objectives of the trips to the volcanic uplands were to assess land use and vegetation cover in Parque Nacionales los Percoles. When a fast-moving fire broke out in the agave understory on the steep slopes of Santa Ana Volcano, the official asked the **Footloose Forester** to assess how best to combat the range/forest fire. Although the slopes were steep, we landed on the rim of the volcano that was wide enough to use as a staging area for supplies and equipment. The officials declined to do that but they did ask the **Footloose Forester** to go aloft another time to map out a strategy for reclamation of the land after the fire was out.

The **Footloose Forester** did not fly on the following day, when disaster struck. More officials wanted to see the fire situation for themselves, so a couple of them were flown to a grassy staging area near the base of Santa Ana Volcano. The shocking story that follows goes something like this: One of the officials didn't want to be dropped off in the hot sun of the pasture, adjacent to the slopes, so asked the helicopter pilot to drop them off under the shade of an umbrella shaped tree. The pilot complied,

but after the passengers deplaned and he prepared to depart alone, his rotor blade clipped one of the branches. Although he was within a few feet of the ground, the helicopter crashed and burned. The pilot died in the flames that were so intense that in the ashes, not a single piece of the wreckage was larger than 15 inches long.

**Footloose Forester** returned by jeep two days later and made it a priority to visit the crash site. It was hard to believe that nothing, nothing was larger than 15 inches long, regardless of the material from which it was made. He never will understand how metal and glass can be consumed so completely.

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## IN AND UNDER FLYING THINGS

Re-printed from Afghanistan to Zambia  
Chronicles of a **Footloose Forester**

Memoirs might flow as narrative accounts to those who compose them or be read as non-fiction histories by those who seek them. To the **Footloose Forester** most ideas destined for memoirs were mere flashes of sights, reveries and impressions so powerful in their effect that he hoped just not to forget them. Some of the most vivid of his memories were so sudden but so fleeting that it was always going to be a real challenge to commit them to tales worth the telling. After languishing for many years as stored thoughts, the telling was going to be a daunting task. This effort is a feeble start.

### INSIDE FLYING THINGS

Coming in for a landing that windy day at Banjul Airport in The Gambia would seem to have been routine for most passengers on our Air Afrique flight out of Nairobi. Routine, that is, for those who perhaps did not notice that upon final approach the right wing dipped so severely that the plane was within inches of doing a cartwheel down the runway. From the looks in the eyes of other passengers, nobody seemed to notice or wondered why the pilot then gunned the engines and aborted the landing to go around a second time. The **Footloose Forester** was sitting in a window seat on the right side of that DC-9 aircraft, studying the landscape as he had done hundreds of times before. He saw what was unfolding. When we landed he waited until after all the others had departed so that he could have a few words with the pilot. Although the pilot looked as cool as a commuter debarking from a ferry boat, he quietly acknowledged

that a strong wind shear almost stuck the right wing into the pavement. No other comment from that skilled professional was forthcoming, but none was needed.

The Bell AO-1 observation helicopter flight into Bear Cat, Viet Nam was among the most thrilling of the nearly 100 helicopter commutes that sometimes pop into the daydreams of the **Footloose Forester**. In those days during the Viet Nam war he carried a set of travel orders that authorized him to fly anywhere, in any available aircraft. Getting to Bear Cat by road was out of the question, and that tiny fire base in Binh Long Province was so small that it didn't have a runway for fixed wing aircraft. So, we flew in a two-place Bell AO-1. Two seats! The rail-thin pilot who approached two Bear Cat passengers at the gate didn't tell us at the time what kind of craft he was flying. Probably he didn't want to disappoint us because he knew the next infrequent ride into Bear Cat might be days later. The first passenger, a soldier, had a big duffel bag which got lodged behind the seat and he himself sat perched in the middle, sort of sharing the regular passenger's seat. The **Footloose Forester** got the right side, the outside position. Too small to get his right arm and right leg into the compartment, so we could not close the Plexiglas door that kept the wind out, except that this craft had no Plexiglas door. It had been removed. So **Footloose Forester** flew the 50 miles or so to Bear Cat with one arm and one leg sticking out. But the thoughtful pilot let him have the safety belt, just in case a downdraft bounced him out of his shared seat. It was a thrilling ride.

Another thriller of a helicopter ride was with a Marine pilot out of Tuy Hoa north of Phan Ranh. That "Mr. Roberts" type of cowboy took off in his Huey slick at the edge of the regular runway, just like he was taking off in a jet. That is to say, he didn't work the stick to rise up vertically at take-off but zoomed forward down the runway a few feet off the deck; and when we reached the end of the tarmac, he pitched the craft forward and downward to just above the tops of the rice fields below the runway. The **Footloose Forester** didn't know at that time that the Tuy Hoa airfield was built on a plateau. We skimmed along the rice fields until it was clear that we were below the level of the village he was headed for. The **Footloose Forester** remembers looking up into the bottom floor of a hut and seeing daylight through the back of the hut. Cowboy suddenly rotoed up and we just cleared the tree line; then he abruptly dropped the Huey back down again to the level of the rice fields on the other side of the small village. The cowboy smiled, having obtained complete surprise with his flight path and with his little game with greenies in Viet Nam. He then confided to us that the routine was to make us a downward target, just in case someone in the village wanted to shoot at us.

Once in a while the Huey copters were called slicks, primarily to carry cargo and passengers, and once in a while they were known as gunships armed with one or two M-60 machine guns mounted in the open



doorways. It didn't matter which type you were in; the VC might shoot at you if they had an opportunity. But the **Footloose Forester** sometimes wondered when climbing aboard a gun ship if this was going to be the time some VC on the ground was going to challenge the side door gunner to see who the better shot was. The VC did shoot at Medivac helicopters, so there was no illusion about the sanctity of those big Red Cross emblems painted on both sides of Medivacs.

## UNDER FLYING THINGS

To be fair, the only time that the **Footloose Forester** can remember a case of the VC shooting at a Medivac helicopter was when he was directly below a copter as it was coming in for a landing on the roof of the evacuation hospital in Saigon. As they came in from the northwest, the Medivacs flew directly over the fairways of the Golf Club de Saigon. **Footloose Forester** was a member there and was walking down the 15<sup>th</sup> fairway in the company of an Irish water systems engineer when a Medivac helicopter came overhead. We both looked up as the chopper passed over our heads and then heard the whiz of three bullets that passed just under the fuselage. We never heard the sound of the muzzle blasts, only the whiz and snap of the bullets.

Yes, we played golf during the war. The only 18 hole golf course in the country was the Golf Club de Saigon and since it was within sight of the Military Assistance Command, Viet Nam headquarters on Tan Son Nhut Airport, it was itself a battle ground for a VC assault on the MAC-V headquarters of General Westmoreland during the Tet offensive and again during the second summer offensive of 1968. Since the **Footloose Forester's** office was just across the street from the club house of the golf course, he sometimes played during his lunch hour. With a long siesta type lunch period it was not difficult to squeeze in 9 holes if he got to the first tee without waiting. Golf amid the machine gun bunkers and Claymore mines that decorated the fairways is another story—for later.

To be sure, the fondest memories of being under flying things were those times when he was under the canopy of hang gliders in Pennsylvania and at Kitty Hawk; and under the lighter canopies of para gliders near Kitty Hawk and in the highlands of Wales. He could never get enough air time and ended his flying days with too little experience, but great daydreams.

One other episode that **Footloose Forester** wanted to commit to print was the chain of events during the Tet Offensive of early February 1968. Four aircraft were part of that full story, but some of the details are

now long forgotten. The story began with a trip from Saigon to Dalat in the resort area of the Central Highlands where **Footloose Forester** planned to take his belated honeymoon. Before he could execute a straight flight into Dalat on a previously scheduled company business trip (honeymoon to follow), he was called to work on a dust and erosion control plan for 20<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion at their headquarters in Dong Ba Tin, just opposite the sprawling Army, Navy and Air Force base at Camh Ranh Bay. When a general called for you, you went, post haste. So **Footloose Forester** made arrangements with his new bride, Thu, to fly on a commercial Air Viet Nam flight into Dalat and wait there until he arrived a few days hence. All well, to date. The Caribou cargo plane (or a C-130) to Camh Ranh was routine and the Dust & Erosion Control Plan writing assignment that led to a \$1.5 million project went well. He doesn't remember what kind of aircraft took him from Camh Ranh to Dalat, but the rest of the story is still pretty vivid in his memory.

The Tet Offensive broke out at the tail end of their honeymoon. The honeymoon was planned for three or four days and was pretty tame. Since he had arrived on official business in a military aircraft and was expected to complete his assignments in Dong Ba Tin and then in Dalat in a business mode using the resources provided to him, he arranged his return trip on another military flight, then said "see ya later" to Thu and trusted that her return trip ticket would take her home to Saigon. He set out for the Dalat airport early in the morning, since he had gotten word the night before when his flight was expected to depart. When he got there, he was surprised to learn that his ride was going to be on an Air Force DC-3, the fabled "goony bird" of World War II fame. Once aboard, **Footloose Forester** became just another passenger who soon was informed that something big was going down.

Our destination was Tan Son Nhut on the outskirts of Saigon. When we got over Saigon the crew informed us that we could not land because the airport was under attack and various parts of the city were under siege. Our DC-3 went south to Can Tho for fuel, then back to Saigon to discharge the people and supplies that were part of the original mission. No deal. After we circled for some time, we flew south again to Soc Trang, deep in the Mekong Delta, for more fuel. Then we flew over Saigon once again and once more were denied landing instructions, so the pilot chose to go north to Nha Thang, even further north than Cam Ranh Bay. It was there that we changed planes. An Air Force brigadier general commandeered a small twin-engine "Twin Beech" and announced his intention to fly to Saigon, no matter what. He asked if anyone else wanted to go along since there were plenty of seats and he had only a few staff members with him. The **Footloose Forester** was the only taker, since he lived on the outskirts of Saigon and wanted to get home to his new bride.

Once again, it was no deal for landing in Saigon and once again we proceeded to Can Tho for fuel. Probably the word was out that Can Tho was one of the few major bases that was not under siege. Then we tried a final time to land at Tan Son Nhut and when we were again diverted, we were instructed to try for Bien Hoa Air Base some 25 miles east of Saigon. When we arrived over the airfield, the general, who was also the pilot, announced into the intercom that there was a fire-fight going on at one end of the runway and another fire-fight going on at the other end. Tighten your seat belt, he said "I'm going in steep and putting it down in the middle of the runway." So he did. As the only civilian on the plane, the general told **Footloose Forester** that they had other responsibilities and he taxied directly across the runway to a large sandbag bunker where he dropped off **Footloose Forester** to fend for himself for about 24 hours. The following evening the **Footloose Forester** accepted a ride on an ammunition supply run from Bien Hoa into Tan Son Nhut, where he remained for about 10 days. He slept under his desk every night and ate his meals at one of several Army mess halls linked to the MAC-V operations. Only when he got home some 10 days after the last hours of his honeymoon did he learn that his sweetheart was safe, with her own tales to tell.

Most of the time the **Footloose Forester** commuted up and down country in the four-engine C-130 Hercules cargo planes that were the work horses of the Air Force, and sometimes in the noisy twin engine Hiller-Fairchild C-123s. When combined with a hundred or so flights in helicopters, he remembers an informal count of over 500 flights. When Pacific Architects & Engineers finally obtained two of their own DeHaviland Caribou twin engine transports over the strenuous objections of the Army Contracting Officer, the scheduling around the country became more predictable and **Footloose Forester** logged nearly two hundred more trips. Hard to reconcile that number now, some three decades later, but the trips throughout Viet Nam were in his work files, so he had records of his activities, if not of every leg in those sojourns.

Other memories of flight creep into his daydreams. One was of looking up to watch a young herder on a mountain side as our Fokker Friendship came in to land in a dry river bed at Pokera, Nepal. Another was the sheer amazement at the pilots and their aircraft at an air show in Guatemala. On his way back to Florida, the **Footloose Forester** was delayed when the main international airport was closed to accommodate the event. He had a free, ringside seat; and he can never forget seeing a twin-engine Fokker pass the main viewing stands with both engines shut down and the plane flying silently in an inverted position at a speed of nearly 200 miles an hour and only a hundred feet above the ground. It was the best air show he ever saw.

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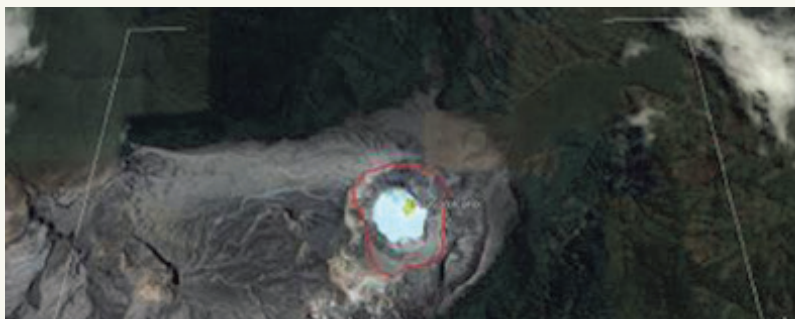
## INTO THE VOLCANO

The seminal *Chronicles of a **Footloose Forester*** has always been an unscheduled mélange of essays, stories, dreams, and adventures. If he had his way, the adventures would predominate and the stories would follow. The dreams pop up uninvited but not unexpected, and, finally, the essays are laborious creations that may or may not relate to a lifetime of pondering about how things are related. In recent years there are fewer and fewer adventures to remember, fewer savory tales to tell, and a dilution of the occasional dreams that stimulate his psyche. These days the stories and the adventures can only be constituted from brief fragments of reverie. No more set piece adventures with prior plans, conscious execution, and storied summaries. The wild times are over.

The days of rough-and-tumble adventuring...On the road...again! may be over but snippets of reverie about some of the more exciting times just refuse to go away. Going into volcanos easily qualifies as adventure, even if there have been few details to assist in bringing the episodes to life. This chronicle is an attempt to resurrect the spirit of adventuring by collecting a few of those snippets of reverie. As usual, the times are without chronology and the places not chosen in advance.

The first volcano into which the **Footloose Forester** ever descended was not the first one he ever saw up close, but it was the second. The first was Volcán Irazú due east and not far from San Jose, Costa Rica. He immediately developed a yearning to go beyond the volcano rim and down into the caldera but he was a part of a study group whose timetable did not allow that to happen. That same study group, however; spent a few hours at another volcano a few days later and the **Footloose Forester** jumped at the opportunity to explore on his own. He left the others and descended into the heart of the caldera of Volcán Poás. The memory of the molten gray soup of liquefied rock in the lake of the caldera is one of

those mental photos that we all relate to. It would be inaccurate to say that the soup was red hot, but it was hot enough to cause steam to form whenever the wind pushed even small waves against the walls of the caldera. Volcán Poás has erupted 40 times since 1828 and was finally closed to pedestrian traffic after its last eruption in April 2017.



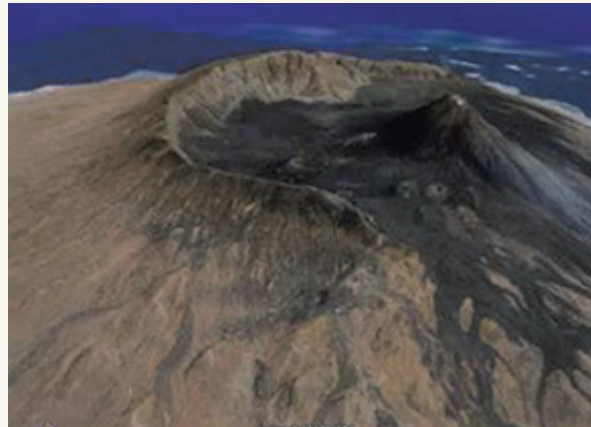
Volcán Poás - Red line indicates clockwise trek into Poás

One last trek to the rim of a volcano in Costa Rica was to witness the fury of Volcán Tenorio in Guanacaste Province. The sound of steam coming from fumaroles on its flanks and the stench of sulfurous gas was so overpowering that we thought we were risking our lungs by tarrying too long. On our way back down to the road, we passed a stone hut that had been abandoned. There was volcanic ash half way up the outside of the open doorway, marking just how deep the ash blanket of a recent eruption really was.

Witnessing the fiery and restless magma chamber of the fire pit of Kilauea Volcano in Hawaii was enough to dissuade any desire to venture closer to peer into its yawning caldera. Besides, the walls of the caldera are practically vertical all around and have been roped off to prevent anyone from getting too close and losing their balance. Another indelible impression, however; of the forces of nature. Volcanos have their own timetables regarding when they display their most awesome awesomeness, but Kilauea Volcano has been actively erupting almost continuously for several decades, making it one of the most active volcanos in the world.

The taxi ride into the interior of the caldera of Fogo, a volcano in the Cape Verde Islands, was seemingly the antithesis of danger because there has long been a winding road constructed there that cuts through a breach in one of its flanks, making access fairly routine. But as a giant that does not always sleep, Fogo

erupted several times in the 1800s, erupted again in 1951 and 1995, and most recently in 2014, not long after the time the **Footloose Forester** set foot in its caldera in 1987.



Fogo Volcano, Cape Verde Archipelago

The chain of volcanos lining the cordillera of western Central America is like a necklace of pimples in the landscape. Some are large and some are small. Some are actively smoking and rumbling, while others are presently sleeping. One of the small ones that was so conveniently accessible to a major road in El Salvador was a sure bet to be on the list of places that **Footloose Forester** planned to visit. In fact, when the opportunity to explore it came up, he asked the bus driver to drop him off opposite the most likely access point adjacent to the highway. The stop was not his destination but it was so quick and straight forward that **Footloose Forester** can scarcely believe that he quickly descended to the very center of the caldera where only a few weeds were growing in their innocuous bed of unique soil. Only by looking up to see the symmetrical ring of the volcano's steep walls did he appreciate the fact that local people live on its outer slopes.

Only a few days later the **Footloose Forester** took the opportunity to climb the flanks of Volcán Izalco, in the heart of the Volcanos Region of El Salvador. The experience is one he will never forget. Not only did he fulfill a genuine bucket list type of adventure, but he was forever rewarded with access to photos and satellite images of an iconic volcano that has a vibrant history of eruptive activity. Volcán Izalco is among the most recent in the history of El Salvador to develop yet has a history as one of the most active.



It erupted almost continuously from 1770 to 1958, earning it the nickname of “Lighthouse of the Pacific.” It last erupted in 1966.

Scrambling up the slopes of Izalco to its narrow rim took only a couple of hours. Despite the fact that The Lighthouse of the Pacific no longer emits a steady column of smoke, there are a couple of small fumaroles inside the rim near the top. Wisps of sulfurous smoke appear occasionally but are not constant. The descent to the now inactive floor of the caldera was not difficult, so **Footloose Forester** worked his way down to the floor just to embellish the memory of standing inside of a famous volcano.

The Santa Ana Volcano is only a few miles away and its flanks are visible from Izalco. The Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganadaria made getting to the top very easy, as we gently set down on its narrow rim in a government helicopter. Santa Ana is one of those that has a sizeable lake of molten magma at its core and usually emits thin columns of smoke and steam. That snippet of reverie was also short but sweet.

An Economics professor at Rutgers once interrupted the chalkboard drawing of his demand curve to turn to us, his students, and, out of the blue, he declared that “real adventure is in books.” The **Footloose Forester** was immediately puzzled by that statement and has lived out his life wondering how real adventure could be more compelling than being ... *On the road...again!* and living the adventures that may or may not be found in books.



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## CHEMISTRY IS HARD

The urge to air out old memories often reaches a level high enough to prompt another self-punishing chronicle by the **Footloose Forester**. This one might belong in the Confessions category of stories but baring his own soul from time to time has always been cathartic for a **Footloose Forester** who prefers things to be out in the open, rather than being obscured by misperception or misunderstanding. Worse yet, having things that needlessly stay hidden in secrecy or shame. This chronicle contains a bit of clarification about his academic record that was full of ups and downs, achievements and failures; but was always tenuously buoyed by aspirations in the face of his own mediocrity. It is self-examination of the **Footloose Forester's** relationship with chemistry.

Chemistry was required in the forestry curriculum at the College of Agriculture, Rutgers University. We Aggies had to pass both General Chemistry and Organic Chemistry in order to earn a Bachelor's Degree. In addition, those who declared a major in agricultural research had to take both Qualitative Analysis and Quantitative Analysis in order to earn their degree. Theirs was a very difficult major because Chemistry is hard. During those undergraduate years the **Footloose Forester** was spared from a heavy dose of Chemistry, and thankfully so. He failed the second semester of General Chemistry and struggled to earn a C in Organic Chemistry and only with the tutored help of his brilliant roommate, Bruce A. Hamilton.

In truth, the **Footloose Forester** liked chemistry and knew that he would have to understand it well enough if he intended to prosper in the agricultural sciences. He knew that modern science was going to throw concepts and principles at him, and he needed to earn his way into being accepted as a professional. More chemistry was on the way. No doubt about it.

There is a difference between being enrolled in a chemistry course and excelling in that course. Real chemistry majors normally excelled because they usually had the requisite advanced math and computational skills that went along with the challenges in the field of chemistry. There was no way to fake it. If the ingredients were not right, the results were not right. If the calculations were not right, the presumptive inputs did not and would not lead to the envisioned success. Real chemistry majors seemed to know what to expect; but the **Footloose Forester** was always guessing at what the results might be.

Graduate courses in the agricultural sciences necessarily required the infusion of chemistry, both theoretical and applied. For the **Footloose Forester** who bit the bullet when he decided to seek an advanced degree, he knew that his limited intellect would be tested in various chemistry and computational courses. Not only was it a case of sink or swim, he knew that he had to be a strong swimmer in order to not drown in Graduate School. Perhaps other students secretly harbored self-doubt, but the **Footloose Forester** knew that he had only an average intelligence in his toolbox, so made no pretense about his qualifications. It would be a long, hard fight because chemistry is hard. As he told his mother, he would accept being the last in his class, as long as he got through.

As a Graduate Student in Agronomy & Soil Science, there were many quantitative and qualitative core courses: Soil Chemistry, Biochemistry, Soil Physics, Qualitative Analysis, College Algebra, Calculus, Statistics, Experimental Design, Plant Physiology, Crop Physiology, Soil Fertility, Advanced Soil Fertility, and Advanced Techniques in Laboratory Procedures. And there were others, as well.

Sometimes hands-on math and chemistry skills were foundational in understanding and applying the principles of soil chemistry and soil physics; and sometimes the concepts in wet chemistry, physical chemistry, geochemistry, and biochemistry were merely implied. Chemistry is hard, but it is so fundamental to science that without it (and physics) we would not know how to invent new things. You don't really know where you are going until you know where you are, and where you have come from.

If it were not for the fact that other Graduate Students worried aloud about their struggles in math and chemistry courses, the **Footloose Forester** might have despaired. After all, he perceived that everyone in his class was smarter than he was. But he was a self-identified grinder and was determined to grind away with the only identity he could claim. One of his personal heroes also reminded him that she also struggled in Graduate School at Princeton. She was there earning a Ph.D. in Organic Chemistry but admitted that she struggled with Calculus. Nonetheless, the **Footloose Forester** had wagered that she

would be in the top half of her class; and it was a pleasure to reward her with a \$50 bill that he carried in his wallet, specifically for that luncheon in Princeton when he inquired about her standing at the end of the semester. Fond memory! But Chemistry is still hard.

Earning his credentials was one of the reasons that he took more than a year to conduct his own analysis of soils and their properties in both chemistry and physics laboratories. In the end, he was proud to have understood what he discovered when he analyzed for Potassium, Sodium, Magnesium, Calcium, Manganese, Aluminum, Iron, soil pH, Phosphorous, Nitrogen, the cation exchange capacity of various soils, and their base saturation percentages. The chemistry was hard, but it was satisfying to find answers to explain how and why soil is so dynamic in the environment.

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## FOLLOW THE TRAIL OF BREADCRUMBS

As movie fans and tv viewers know all too well, there are certain lines in the scripts that become classics that develop a life of their own. We subconsciously get a kick out of hearing repeated those few words spoken by Brett Butler in *Gone With the Wind*, “frankly, Scarlett I don’t give a damn.” Or, “you had me at Hello” in *Jerry McGuire*. Or “follow the evidence” the main operating principle of forensic scientists. The words, if not the actors, live on in our collective psyches. Oftentimes iconic one-liners are effective stimuli in developing ways we incorporate notable thoughts to fine-tune our approaches to everyday tasks.

The one simplistic admonishment from the detective show *C.S.I.* (crime scene investigations) to follow the evidence has other practical applications: follow the money, follow the scent, and follow the trail of breadcrumbs. When you review the other items of interest it becomes clear that the money, the scent, and the breadcrumbs can be considered as evidence. In this attempt at a parable, the focus will be on breadcrumbs.

Solid evidence, shaky evidence, questionable evidence, or planted evidence, but all legitimate avenues of investigation cannot ignore even the flimsiest of clues because all may have intrinsic characteristics that can be elucidated. Such is the nature of investigations themselves, to strive for elucidation to the point that sustainable conclusions can be reached. Needless to say, the subject of investigations looms large in present-day politics. For the moment, however; the evidence in this parable is all about mere breadcrumbs.

The physical appearances of the crumbs of French bread are different from those of the mass-produced Wonder Bread of years gone by. So is the chemical composition. It may take a chemical analysis of the breadcrumbs to establish graphic evidence of how the ingredients themselves are slightly different, but that

is what a thorough investigation is likely to do. If the overall investigation of some heinous act includes trace evidence of a trail of breadcrumbs, following the breadcrumbs themselves may be called for. Or not. Casual observers and casual investigations may not appreciate the evidence at the crime scene, but we can hope that they do.

The distinctions between good investigative techniques and slipshod ones may never come to light because, in the tv and newspaper accounts of important investigations, we the general public are never apprised of the methodology or in the details that led to news accounts. We read about and listen to what has been reported, but not necessarily what has been investigated.

At this stage in the parable, it might be said that there is real relevance in a tale about breadcrumbs—French breadcrumbs. When he was assigned as a Soil Conservation Specialist in the former Portuguese Archipelago of the Cape Verde Islands, we expatriates longed to have our daily bread that was as good as the French bread from Senegal, more than 500 km away on the African mainland. The local bread baked by the Cape Verdeans was done (presumably) using the colonial methods and style of the erstwhile Portuguese masters. It was edible if it was within a few hours of freshness, but day-old bread hardened up beyond the point of even being tempted to eat it. Without going into hyperbole, it is safe to say that even the Cape Verdeans knew that day-old bread was a lost cause. And that is why the subject of French bread is so deeply hard-wired into the brain of the **Footloose Forester**.

Whenever we expatriates traveled to Senegal on business, we of course enjoyed French bread with our continental breakfasts and in sandwiches for lunch. Speaking for himself, the **Footloose Forester** made it a point to buy as many baguettes as he could carry in his luggage when he returned to Cape Verde. They went as small gifts to friends and workers in our little community and the reciprocity eventually began to catch on.

On the occasion of speaking with an expatriate making his first trip to Cape Verde, the man noticed the large bag of baguettes and inquired whether or not they have bread in Cape Verde. The **Footloose Forester** answered yes but said you will soon learn the difference about their bread. Follow the breadcrumbs and you will discover that not all bread is made the same.

The visceral images of various breads go back many years in the peripatetic career of the **Footloose Forester**. It had something to do with often being hungry and ultimately being appeased with simple flat

bread emerging still warm from open-air clay ovens. And the fact that those pita, nun, and chapati flat breads from Lebanon and Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India were all easy to stuff into a back pack for later consumption on the trail. Of course, genuine French baguettes have a texture and deliciousness that is very special. Fortunately, there are many places in former French colonial countries where good baguettes are still being baked. That included Senegal, the source of our occasional treats that we did not take for granted. Finally, when an investigator studied the breadcrumbs left over at our breakfast table back in Cape Verde, it was obvious that we had a French Connection.

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## THOSE FRUITFUL LUNCH HOURS

Over the years, the **Footloose Forester** had developed a modus operandi for achieving some of his planned free time activities. He was not unlike other people who had both big plans and small, immediate goals. Big plans required adequate planning but immediate wishes did not always require any planning, at all. When he found an arrowhead along the trail, he picked it up and put it into his pocket, but he then began thinking about ways that he could look for more, in the same or other likely places. For a working man, that was a minor problem because his jobsite, so to speak, was in the woods, or miles from his nominal office. Many times, his jobsite was in a foreign country. But his desire to take advantage of his circumstances required that he justify spending time looking for arrowheads, or visiting volcanoes, or fishing for native trout; during normal working hours on the job.

There is little doubt that some of his colleagues and a few supervisors were always looking for ways to accuse him of slacking off on the job, or of not doing what he was supposed to be doing. The **Footloose Forester** very often worked alone, thus it was natural for others to wonder about his work habits. Most times they could only presume, but more than once they took their assumptions to a supervisor who, in turn, asked the **Footloose Forester** to explain himself regarding what he actually did during those work days alone. **Footloose Forester** developed a coping strategy and it was: to pursue his plans during vacations, regular days off, after working hours, and during his allotted lunch hours.

Time dims the circumstances regarding how he worked out his various strategies to enjoy his diversions, but each job presented some opportunities. They say that opportunity knocks only once, and he took that homily to heart at an early age. Even as a paper boy at the age of ten, and progressing through dozens of jobs over the years, he kept his ears and eyes open for opportunities as he saw them and understood



them. It seldom had anything to do with personal ambition or advancement; more likely it was about discovering a new fishing hole or following up with a hike to search for arrowheads. Or to discover new rock formations. Or to climb a new mountain. As a loner even at an early age, the **Footloose Forester**, hiked many a trail alone and climbed a few very tall mountains without companions.

Fulfilling his wanderlust was straightforward during vacations but taking advantage of the opportunities when he was on the job limited his options. It was either after work, or during his lunch hour. Playing golf after work in Botswana or Rwanda, for example; did not require as much explaining to his critics, but it may have required them to accept the premise that **Footloose Forester** often went on the road with his golf clubs in his luggage. Opportunities were there, and sometime he had to create them.

Playing golf after work at the Golf Club de Saigon was largely out of the question because it got too dark to finish a round when he emerged from his office just across the street from the clubhouse. His solution was to play during the extended lunch hour in Viet Nam, a hot period in the middle of the day when nobody else ventured to the first tee. The good thing was that **Footloose Forester** and fellow employees at Pacific Architects & Engineers were entitled to a 2 ½ hour lunch period, enough time to finish nine holes. Those opportunities were there but **Footloose Forester** almost always played alone.

Back in the United States, the **Footloose Forester** also used lunch hour to search for mushrooms in parks and common areas in urban settings, and deep in the forest when his entire work day was spent in the woods. That is not to say that mushrooms were available everywhere or in every season. In the spring of the year and after the snow receded, patches of bare ground in the forest began to sport Morel mushrooms. The magnificent Morels seemed to favor patches of land that had been burnt over in forest fires, and the **Footloose Forester** wasted no time in planning to capitalize on his presence in their midst to harvest as many of them as he could. He recalls mushroom hunting in other places as well. Germany, Indonesia, Malawi, and Kenya come to mind.

During a period when he was designated as an inspector of tree planting operations being conducted by contractors to the US Forest Service, the **Footloose Forester** spent his mornings and afternoons digging up hundreds of contractor-planted trees and otherwise evaluating their planting techniques; but he spent his lunch hour harvesting Morel mushrooms in near-by burnt over patches. Lunch was always secondary but lunch time was always cherished as a period of exploration and personal gratification.



Morel Mushrooms

The suspicions about how **Footloose Forester** spent his time on the job never did completely go away, as he knew they would not, so he just made sure that he limited his golfing, his mushroom hunting, and his other recreational activities to the permitted free time, or to after-hours. People are always going to judge you, so it is in your own self-interest that when you look in a mirror, you do not deceive yourself about how you have conducted yourself. To thine own self be true.

By the way, **Footloose Forester** usually had a plastic bag or two stowed away in his car to transport his mushrooms, or berries, or decorative Sugar Pine cones that he planned to use for decorating the mantle above his fireplace. And the spacious pocket in the back of his cruiser's vest seldom returned empty from the woods. Before he was finished with the tree planting inspection project, he had collected about 25 pounds of Morels. Those that we in the fire barracks did not eat with dinner steak one day, we had with bacon and eggs for breakfast the following day. He gave the rest to the foreman of the tree planting crew.

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## GOLF IS GREAT IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

As a country right next door to Haiti, and occupying about 2/3 of the Island of Hispaniola, the Dominican Republic was also a pleasure in contrasts. The **Footloose Forester** went there several times, on business and for pleasure. The business part had mostly to do with the Agroforestry Outreach Project in Haiti. As neighbors, we consulted back and forth regarding nursery technology, outreach programs, program implementation issues, and the like. Some of the contacts were smooth and fruitful; but one or two were a bit thorny. On one occasion, the **Footloose Forester** was urged by his Project Manager in Haiti to visit the USAID office in Santa Domingo with a particular objective in mind. The Project Officer, a Direct-Hire USAID employee set the trip up, starting with the mandatory notification by cable to his counterpart that Footloose was coming. But that counterpart of his Project Manager was out of the office when Footloose arrived, so he explained to the only other USAID employee in the office what his mission was, and the fact that a cable authorizing the trip describing his mission had already been sent. That routine protocol gesture did not deter the Dominican counterpart (a white American) from laying into Footloose and threatening to send him back to Haiti, for the audacity of working in the USAID library without his knowledge. **Footloose Forester** really enjoyed such encounters. The first thing he said was that he would be happy to close his notepad, go pack his things and leave the country. Then he would go ask his Project Manager to contact his counterpart and ask him why he did not read the authorizing cable, nor permit **Footloose Forester** to conduct his mission. There seem to be too many autocrats in USAID who think that the country they are working in is their country, and that they can order people out, if they so choose.

A more pleasant working visit was later worked out with more satisfactory logistics. **Footloose Forester** got authorization to travel by auto across the border into the western part of the country and visit with project associates in the field before having to lock horns with bureaucrats in Santa Domingo. It was

also an adventure in contrasts on the ground, just as the contrast in the landscape of the border region between the Dominican Republic and Haiti can be seen in satellite photographs. On the Dominican side the landscape appears green in photos; on the Haiti side it is decidedly brown and barren. So it was as he approached the border crossing in low gear along a narrow, deeply rutted and unpaved road on the Haiti side. Once through the seldom-visited immigration hut, he quickly accelerated into high gear along a paved road.

The Dominican Republic was proud of its golf courses. The **Footloose Forester** had planned for years to play there, and during one short vacation period, he played twice. Details about the planning are obscure now, but he remembers driving east out of Santa Domingo early in the morning to be at the golf course early enough to work out any tee time arrangement that might be posed to him. About 10-15 miles before he reached his destination, he remembers coming into a medium sized town while it was still dark. The town enforced their speed limit by digging shallow trenches across the road at strategic places at either end of town. When you hit one of those trenches in the dark, it makes your teeth rattle and the underside of the car gets a more severe jolt. After finding out the hard way going to the golf course, Footloose was prepared on the way back, again in the dark after the sun went down. This time he pulled off to verify that the trenches were indeed cut out of the blacktop road material to a depth of 6-8 inches.

By the way, he played alone on a great golf course. The other more famous course at Punta Cana was a few miles away and had a waiting list, so he accepted a tee time to play on another Robert Trent Jones course. He was even allowed to walk, something he always preferred to do when he had the chance. The next day, choosing which course to play on was not an issue.

On another trip, or a previous one, **Footloose Forester** arrived by air after midnight. He rented a car at the airport and started into town but decided that he was far too tired to look for a hotel at that late hour. So he drove just far enough to give himself a good start in the morning. He stopped at one of the few cabanas that still had their lights on and asked for a room. They wanted payment in advance, but then handed him a towel, a piece of soap (unwrapped and previously used), a partial roll of toilet paper; and a condom. Standard issue, one presumes, for cheap cabanas far from the lights of the city.

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## TRAIL MIX

Remembering the name of one of his favorite snacks proved to be task that would not be completed until early the next morning, upon waking from sleep. Going to bed trying to think of the name very often was the best way to have it pop into his head early the next morning. It had worked many times before, thanks to beckoning his subconscious mind for that information. And it worked this time. The fruit of the tamarind tree was that favorite snack.

As a forester who was on the trail day after day, year after year, the **Footloose Forester** made it a habit to seek out trees, shrubs, and bushes that would provide him with fortifying, thirst quenching edible snacks that also boosted his vitamin intake and to do it along the way. You might say that it was stocking up on trail mix while on the trail. There are a few memorable times when the trail mix was remembered better than the trails themselves.

The blackberries, raspberries, huckleberries, currents, blueberries, and strawberries were so common in some places and in so many states that they hardly stand out as prime examples of trail mix but, looking back the family of berries best qualified as the kind of snack that could be eaten fresh from the plant and could also be jammed into pockets and backpacks for consumption further along the trail. That also goes for wild grape, during a narrow time frame in the fall of the year.

The eclectic variety of ingredients of trail mix that the **Footloose Forester** remembers from the past was seldom—if ever, a true mix of ingredients purposely put into the same packet. Rather, the variety of common berries from local trails were mixed in his memory with a few exotic locales and tropical venues where he was also able to savor the delights of equally exotic forest fruits. There were fresh plantains in



Costa Rica, Surinam cherries in Hawaii, jujube apples in Pakistan and Mali, young coconut rinds in Honduras, the fruiting bodies of rattan in Indonesia, and tamarinds in Haiti. And there were star fruits and rambutan; custard apples, soursops, white sapote, guavas and several other fleshy tree fruits from tropical countries. He also recalls filling his pockets with cloves in Comoros; and ginseng in Russia. Above all, there were the tamarinds in Haiti.

The tartness of the wild tamarinds was a perfect antidote for a dry mouth along the many mountain paths in Haiti where the **Footloose Forester** lived for several years. In addition, they were loaded with Vitamin C, and an essential ingredient in sangria. The best thing about tamarind was its leathery outer pod that protected the pulp-encased seeds inside. Tamarind trees tend to produce an abundance of seed pods and because the tough, dry outer pod holds up well, they are easy to stuff into a pocket or backpack until you ready to savor the pulp inside.

The **Footloose Forester** had a favorite tree that stood near the edge of a steep hill where cultivating the land was so difficult that the Haitian farmers were discouraged from trying. That relatively large and prolific pod producing *Tamarindus indica* standing there over the decades seemed to be a public service provider to anyone who stopped by. It was by the side of the road on a major highway, thus made for a quick stop to fill up his pocket.

By all means, geneticists have developed a sweet variety of tamarind that is available in some supermarkets, particularly in tropical and sub-tropical areas. Likewise, there is a sweet variety of starfruit that is sold commercially that is quite unlike that sour starfruit that can be found in the tropical forests of South East Asia. And although there are two different varieties of jujube (*Zyzyphus jujuba*) presently growing in the Virginia garden of his beloved Bengal Tiger, the **Footloose Forester** will forever remember the serendipity of those tiny jujube apples that he harvested as trail mix in Pakistan and Mali. Nothing surpassed the number of trips, however; to his favorite tamarind tree that probably still stands on a ridge line in Haiti, some 20 miles northeast of Port-au-Prince.

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## ME LIKE PLAY KAHUKU

Another dream, another opportunity to chronicle about a few of those cherished memories. This one is about golf. “Play golf when and where you can” was one of the admonitions that the **Footloose Forester** shared with others through the years because he was fond of golf and hoped that others would get the same enjoyment out of the game that he did. There was plenty to love about the game. Forget about the scores...there was always the beauty of the surroundings, the warmth of the sunshine, the thrill of a birdie, the companionship of playing partners, the sense of contentment, and the memories of a lifetime.

Yes, there was also the cutting chill of the wind, the sudden drenching from a cloud burst, a shimmering mirage on the horizon of a hot day, a fog so thick that you can't see the green....and other misfortunes. Why is it that they have also evolved into warm memories? Because golf is happiness. If we can no longer play golf, we can dream about it. And that is why the latest dream of the **Footloose Forester** was about Kahuku.

The explanation is twisted and complicated because the Kahuku Golf Club no longer exists. It was swallowed up along with the remains of the former Kahuku sugar cane plantation, as the city center of the small town of Kahuku on the north side of Oahu, Hawaii expanded to its present limits. Kahuku was one of those old and charming Hawaiian villages that long resisted the pace of trinket tourism.

During its heyday, perhaps even tourists were allowed to play on the nine holes of the Kahuku golf course, but there is no evidence that the haoles (Caucasians) from the mainland or tourists from Japan



were actually welcome there. It was after all, once a private club for the enjoyment of the employees of the Kahuku Sugar Cane Plantation.

Long after the vestiges of the defunct sugar cane plantation began to disappear, the nine-hole golf course at Kahuku struggled to survive. A few North Shore golfers played there. It was later opened to the public but it was so far off the beaten path, that most local Oahu residents who did not live on the north shore were barely aware of it. And serious golfers from the mainland could not find out about it because it was not a touted golfing mecca. Finally, it was not certain that anybody from outside of town would get a welcoming smile when they entered the modest pro shop. That is why the intrepid haole **Footloose Forester** who showed up with his golf clubs affected his best kama-aina version of pigeon English in saying “me like play Kahuku.”

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## SERENDIPITY IN THE LIBRARY

Another dream last night...and another attempt at an essay today. Most dreams are not long enough or sensible enough to savor and save as muted inspiration, but over the past few years the **Footloose Forester** has noted that some dreams are so insistent with their central themes and attention to detail that he tentatively concludes that the underlying messages are worthy of analysis. Nobody cares if the analysis is right or wrong, accurate or wildly misleading, so putting the analysis on paper for personal consideration is not doing anybody any harm. But it may do the **Footloose Forester** some good when he someday looks at this chronicle about a dream and tries to understand his views about the world.

One of his emerging views is the hugely important existence of institutions such as libraries. Old libraries with rare books, modern libraries with microfiche, video files, and daily newspapers from several cities from around the world. Even the unacknowledged world libraries that are contained inside hand-held iPads and tablets with linkages to the Internet. The existence of the libraries is one thing, but access to them is quite another.

Although the **Footloose Forester** thinks that the Internet is the greatest library in the world, even the tens of thousands of web sites of the Internet do not afford complete access to all there is to read and to know from each of the scattered libraries around the world. Making all of it available and accessible is a huge challenge but is possible with the technologies that exist today. We have a long way to go but we now know the way.

Last night's dream was about the dreamer going into a quaint old library where the books were shopworn but well kept on shelves; where newspapers and magazines were displayed in racks; and where even single

sheets of paper and loose-leaf reports were displayed in such a way that they attracted the visitor to come close to read. It so happened that the library was a forestry library and the visiting dreamer was seeking to learn about forestry practices in other countries. Ever so gradually it became apparent to the dreamer that the visitor was the **Footloose Forester** and he was still seeking for new knowledge about the tropics and how tropical forests and their environmental conditions differ from those in temperate climates.

The main library in the dream was in Haiti, but all the while the visitor, the **Footloose Forester**, was hoping that he would find a book or two about the forests of Southeast Asia. And that was when he recalled that he was booted out of a university library in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia back in 1967 because he was not a student there. He was asked to leave but not before he had read a bit about how Malaysian foresters used quasi-taxonomic sap and bark keys to identify standing trees in the forest. It was good information, but there was not enough time to digest it all, or to take notes for future ventures into surrounding jungles. Alas, the **Footloose Forester** never again found a university library with such a rich mixture of books on tropical forestry. The BIOTROP library at Kebun Raya in Bogor, Indonesia, nonetheless; is among the very best. He was fortunate enough to have visited and to add it to his short list of world class forestry libraries.

As he was learning to identify the local flora, the **Footloose Forester** was lucky enough to spend a few days at the botanical gardens in Singapore and at the world famous Kebun Raya botanical gardens in Bogor, Indonesia. But he knew that his field observations needed the reassurances of checking his observations in library books and in herbaria in the region. Some of the correct answers to his questions were found in books and on herbarium specimen sheets. Thus, his unrequited desire slipped into his subconscious, only to re-appear in a dream many years later.

Getting back to the dream and the forestry library in Haiti, he was also looking for information about trees and forestry issues pertaining to the forests of the Caribbean and Central America. During his search and going from room to room, the **Footloose Forester** noticed some of the loose-leaf pages were displayed as macramé flowers in arrays on individual shelves. Bits and pieces of information could be discerned, but not enough to make sense of the passages. He also noticed a few references to the research of others, leading to what has since become the serendipity of the library... and the chosen title of this chronicle.

When he was in college and studying at the Rutgers University Library, the **Footloose Forester** used to take breaks by wandering in the book stacks and skimming the titles, and sometimes the contents of random books. It was his way of opening his eyes to the breadth of information about which he knew nothing at all and was a daily reminder about how ignorant he was of the world beyond his nose.

He also noticed that the daily serendipity of a new book and its contents had links to something else—cross references, as it were. And they were real; and very often important links. Scientific papers that are published in journals almost always have references listed at the end of the articles; and the authors of the articles are expected to provide those supporting references. Authors confident of their views are not afraid to cite the works of others; to support their own views; to clarify the positions of others; or to take issue with the published works that should be challenged. The serendipity of the library can be found in books but especially in the bound journals that invite the reader to seek out the findings of others.

Finally, in the dream the **Footloose Forester** could not help but notice that some of the books, newspapers, and loose-leaf macramé articles were printed in other languages: French, German, Russian, Chinese, and Spanish. That was to be expected because every country has its own forests and its own forestry issues. Making the link to a better understanding of world forestry means taking the steps to discovering the serendipity that has always been there, the serendipity in the library.

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## THE GOAT AND THE PEACOCK

The tiny island of Pulau Peucang off the western tip of Java was the site of one of only two guard stations for Indonesia's Ujung Kulon National Park, a virtually pristine expanse of lowland wet forest and scattered islands that cover about 120,600 hectares. It was also the site chosen to build a modest research station to study the ecology of the one-horned Javan rhino and other animals in that uninhabited forest and wetlands ecosystem. Furthermore, Ujung Kulon is the last known place where the Javan tiger was photographed prior to its extinction. Although getting permission to visit the island and to stay there required written authorization from Ujung Kulon National Park Headquarters, several researchers and even a few well-connected tourists came to stay for periods ranging from a few days to several months. It was during one of the previous tourist trips that a bizarre story was begun.

An Italian tourist who had visited many months before the arrival of the **Footloose Forester** brought with him a goat to slaughter; as food for himself and for the handful of game reserve guards who lived and worked there. For whatever reason, he never got around to killing the goat, so on his departure he left the goat with the chief guard for later butchering. In the meantime, the few young children of the families of the guards took a liking to the goat; and the goat responded by showing outward friendliness toward them. In the end, the chief guard decided to keep the goat as a pet. But it was the wife of the chief guard who told the **Footloose Forester** about the goat and, based on her obvious pleasure in the telling, she was probably the person who pleaded with her husband to keep the goat as a pet.

By the time the **Footloose Forester** arrived at Pulau Peucang to conduct his field research phase concerning the soils and vegetation of Ujung Kulon, the goat and his new human friends had established

routine patterns of activity. The goat would often be seen in their presence, especially when he was hungry, and he stayed under their shelter when the rain pounded down, which was pretty often.

During the rainiest of months on Java, it rained hard for days at a time. The **Footloose Forester** remembers that it once rained for 26 days in the same month. Even the deer from the forest sought refuge under the flooring of the research station. You knew they had crawled under the floorboards when you heard their antlers scraping the bottom of the rough wooden boards; and you could see them through cracks in the floor. Indonesia had some of the heaviest rainfalls that the **Footloose Forester** had ever known; and both man and animal were grateful for dry shelter.

But there were dry and sunny days, as well. At such times, the goat exhibited another routine that caught the attention of the **Footloose Forester**. Since the goat was free to roam anywhere he wanted, whenever he wanted, one of his promenades on dry sunny days just before sunset was toward the tree line just beyond the rear steps of the research station where **Footloose Forester** liked to sit to observe the antics of a family of Javan macaques. Both the macaques and the goat seemed to prefer the late afternoon before sunset to preen in the waning sun and to visit the open spaces near the tree line.

That was also when a peacock would emerge from the forest; mount the raised stump of a fallen tree uprooted in a storm; and call out. At first the **Footloose Forester** thought that the peacock was calling to a mate. But it was the goat that sauntered over to the tree stump and waited. Then the peacock flared out his beautiful iridescent tail feathers and began a dance as the goat stood there and watched. Seeing the peacock doing a dance on the tree stump was always a treat.

The next time it was dry and sunny near sunset, the peacock again appeared, again mounted the same tree stump and once again, called out. And the goat would saunter over and stand there while the peacock flared his tail feathers and began to dance. After the third time that the **Footloose Forester** observed the peacock appear from the forest at sunset and mount the tree stump; and after the goat would arrive from his normal hangout near the human families, the **Footloose Forester** was convinced that the goat and the peacock were friends. It rained a lot in Ujung Kulon, so the sunset ritual of the dancing peacock and the audience of an attentive goat did not take place often, but it was a privilege to see and remains as one of the fondest memories of that jungle paradise.

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## THE GOLOK

Shortly after his arrival on the tiny island of Pulau Peucang in 1975, one of his Indonesian counterparts mentioned that if the **Footloose Forester** intended to go into the forest, he needed to have a golok. A golok is a hand held cutting instrument that resembles a short machete and is an Indonesian style tool that no one who enters the forest should be without. Indeed, the golok is an ideal cutting tool to cut your way in and cut your way out of the dense tropical vegetation most people think of as jungle.

The **Footloose Forester** had anticipated the need to hack his way into and through uncleared paths and trails; and came to Indonesia with his own machete. It was a shorter version of the long-bladed machetes that campesinos in Central America use to cut standing sugar cane. But because there was a length restriction on fitting a machete into his small Samsonite suitcase when he was leaving Costa Rica, the **Footloose Forester** went to a well-stocked ferretería (hardware store) in San Jose, to select one from among the dozens of machetes that were piled in a large display bin in the center of the store.

Even the Costa Ricans had preferences regarding the length of machete blades; thus, there were very long ones and some shorter ones from which to choose. The **Footloose Forester** needed one that fits diagonally within his 24-inch Samsonite suitcase, so he took along a tape measure to assist him in making his choice from within the pile. So, it was that very same 22-inch machete purchased in San Jose, Costa Rica that he later took with him to Indonesia to begin his field work.

As it turned out, the counterpart who escorted the **Footloose Forester** to Pulau Peucang and recommended that he use a golok instead of the machete, was also the supervisor of the 25,000-hectare Ujung Kulon game reserve (later renamed as Ujung Kulon National Park). He offered to shop for a good golok when



he returned to headquarters at Bogor on mainland Java and bring it back when he next returned to Pulau Peucang. He kept his word and returned within two weeks.

In the meantime, the **Footloose Forester** used his machete. It was fine for cutting through heavier stems and small tree trunks, but not so good for fine branches and low shrubbery that we most often encountered in our paths. The goloks that the local game wardens used were better suited for most of the tasks. Also, during the waiting time until his golok arrived, the **Footloose Forester** took his turn at sharpening his machete on the same stones that the locals used to keep their goloks sharp.

Those sharpening stones were not commercially produced items; they were picked up from the ground where we walked; or were sticking up from the ground. When one stone exceeded its practical usefulness, the game wardens would look around for another one to replace it. Although the shape or surface features of each sharpening stone was different, each of them was selected with a practiced eye that knew what it was looking for.

After we took turns sharpening our long knives, the test of the sharpness of the blade was to shave a bit of hair off our arms. Perhaps that idea is a bit of an exaggeration because most Indonesian men don't have hair on their arms. But the **Footloose Forester** had plenty of hair on his arms and after he shaved some off, he was convinced that even with his machete, the sharpening stones and local techniques were up to the task.

When the supervisor returned to Pulau Peucang with a new Indonesian golok, he offered a small apology for not getting one resembling the shape and length of the ones that all the other game wardens had. Just as the locally crafted machetes in Costa Rica were all handmade and varied in length, so too did the golok presented to the **Footloose Forester**.

It was longer and thinner than theirs; and was of a kind that they all said was used for fighting. The local wardens also showed their mild disappointment at the choice.



A golok closely resembling the one owned by the **Footloose Forester**

They need not have worried. The fighting golok of the **Footloose Forester** was the most valuable cutting tool he ever owned. He used it daily when he went into the jungles in Indonesia, but also in other jungles and forests in Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Cape Verde, and Haiti. He knew a quality cutting tool when he saw it, largely because it was crafted from steel that took and held an edge, had a good balance point, was long enough to cut a wide swath but short enough to strap onto his belt in a scabbard crafted from local wood. You might say that obtaining that fighting style of golok was a serendipitous delight.

If it seems that this rambling chronicle is a gushing tribute to a mundane long knife, it attests to the power of recalling people, places, and events in the “stream of consciousness mode” of writing his own legacy in such a way that long forgotten details are recalled one at a time. But that golok was very special...and he used it for 14 more years until someone stole it from the back of his car in Haiti.

Being hand-made items, both the golok and its scabbard were not without faults. The scabbard was crafted from a local wood, probably from a single stem of a small *Rauvolfia serpentina* or snakeroot tree that was

split down the middle, cut to length, gouged out to make space for the blade, and then fitted and joined together. It was held together with thin strips of shaved cattle horn, probably cut with a precise cutting tool, and attached with bone dowels on both top and bottom. The scabbard itself was an objet d'art to behold.

The steel blade was crafted from a source that the **Footloose Forester** could never positively identify. Its shaft at the top was not over 2 mm in thickness and it tapered down to the sharp edge that got lots of action over the years. Inasmuch as Ujung Kulon is the known last refuge for the one-horned Javan rhino, the **Footloose Forester** etched notches at 2 mm intervals along the top by filing the shaft to use it as a ruler. The approximate size and ages of rhinos are determined in the field by measuring the width of their footprints in the mud. And knowing the width of footprints also helps to track movement of rhino offspring.

One of the problems that in-service goloks had was having the sharpened tang of the blade separate from the wooden handle. It was easy enough to pound the tang back into the hole of the handle, but when the wood of the handle dried out, the blades of most inexpensive goloks fell out. The **Footloose Forester** had the same problem with his fighting style golok. He solved the problem by securing the tang into the handle by pounding in two shims. The shims were wart hog ribs, taken from the fresh carcass of a wart hog. By the way, there were dozens of wart hogs running around on tiny Palau Peucang, so finding a carcass was no problem at all. Finally, the **Footloose Forester** sealed the shims into the handle with some Swiss epoxy glue, compliments of a Swiss researcher who knew all about goloks with loose tangs.

One feels a bit naked in the jungle when you don't have a golok to cut a path, as needed. On one occasion when the **Footloose Forester** was following a straight compass line to reach a designated research plot, it took two days of cutting before he reached the center of the plot. He also learned that he could cut only about half a kilometer of jungle vegetation per day. His sharp golok made the work manageable.

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## THE MOST BEAUTIFUL TREE IN THE WORLD

At last the time has come to share information about the most beautiful tree in the world. You will have to use some of your navigational skills to locate it but the journey in Google Earth will be worthwhile. As you are transported to the island of Oahu in Hawaii, you become aware that the Hawaiian Islands are well out into the Pacific Ocean and isolated as few places are. The beauty of those charming islands will forever remain in your memory.

Nothing is quite so splendid as the crown of a mature Benjamin Fig, *Ficus benjamini*. And of all the magnificent trees whose sight has ever thrilled him, the one with no limits of ultimate beauty is found in Honolulu, Hawaii. Go there on a map quest at Latitude 21°17' 37.58" N and Longitude 157° 49' 18.59" W. When you arrive over the area in a Google Earth scene, take the time to search for an image of that scene that was taken in previous years. The overall clarity of the 9/27/2008 photography is perhaps the best choice.



The beautiful Benjamin Fig is breathtaking

In the screenshot that was selected for this chronicle, you will notice two yellow stick pins to mark key features. One of them is Krauss Hall, on the Campus of the University of Hawaii. That was where the **Footloose Forester** spent so many months in his office and in his soil chemistry laboratory during the happiest years of his life. And of course, not far from his inspirational Benjamin Fig just a few blocks away.

Upgrades in Google Earth made it possible to insert an even better image of the beautiful Benjamin fig. In addition, a new street view of the vicinity makes it possible to see under some of the low hanging branches. It is almost like standing there.

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## ADVENTURES IN BANKING

Among the many small decisions one makes when mapping out their life, some of them are truly inconsequential but others develop into long-lasting, practical choices. A person may wish to drive a Mercedes, a Lamborghini or a Rolls Royce, but settle for a Ford or a Chevy because of personal finances. In truth, many or even most of us have owned one or more cars manufactured by the relative giants of the auto industry, whether or not the car models are American, Japanese, British, German, Italian, French, or Korean. Availability, price, and access to maintenance services are all important considerations. Such factors tend to weaken one's preference toward a Lamborghini.

Price is not an issue when choosing a bank, but access to services and maintenance of the account are legitimate considerations. That is why the **Footloose Forester** deliberately chose to open up and maintain a Bank of America account in California in the early 1960s. He was a freshly minted forester who decided to build his career in the West and knew that travel was very much in his plans; indeed, frequent travel was part of his duties within a firm of consulting foresters. Some jobs were hundreds of miles apart and he found himself... *On the road....again!!!* dozens of times throughout the year. Bank of America had over 500 branches in California during those early years, and they regularly boasted their network building goals to include an international banking division. That was the kind of convenience of access and maintenance that he was looking for. You might think that his experiences were bound to become a chronicle entitled Adventures in Banking.

There are those times when we run short of cash and feel pressed to visit our local bank to regain our solvency. When he was growing up in tiny Netcong, New Jersey he had his own bank account, in accordance with the prudence suggested of the adults around him. But he soured on the intransigence of

the Citizens National Bank of Netcong to cash a check for a mere \$15 because it was drawn on another bank only 45 miles away; and the fact that he had recently closed his account in Netcong when he went off to college. Small town bank with small town attitudes. Sorry, they said, we know who you are and where your family lives, but bank policy does not allow us to cash your check unless you have an account here. No wonder that thinking on a grander scale is an imperative when making certain career plans. We are not talking about investment banking here, we are talking about cashing a small check in a small town with one bank.

Fast forward to California and to another small town, Auburn, California. The difference was that Auburn, California had a Bank of America branch office. Over the years, the choice of a major player in the banking world made a lot of difference in remaining solvent in times of meeting an immediate need for cash, but also when planning and executing major purchases. A few of those stories are so bizarre that the **Footloose Forester** really did think of them as Adventures in Banking.

Before the days of credit cards for the average citizen, cash in hand was the principal option when traveling. Of course, travelers' checks were around but only a few companies issued them. On the one hand, some merchants in some countries did accept travelers' checks, but not from all issuers. Some accepted American Express checks, but not others. Others accepted Bank of America Travelers Cheques and American Express but refused the rest. In most places and at most times, it was cash only. Yes, in the good old days travel planning was more problematical than we might otherwise remember.

Getting down to cases.... the Bank of America account of the **Footloose Forester** allowed him to write and cash checks in any of the more than 1,000 branches in California, to quickly access ATM machines in major airports around the world, to obtain local currency at midnight at an ATM in Malta, and other places he does not remember.

With his California account number, the **Footloose Forester** got cash over the counter at branch offices in Saigon; Hanau, Germany; Singapore, Jakarta, Dakar, Senegal, and Hong Kong. The latter episode was especially memorable because although he was expecting a modern bank setting, when he approached the teller in the Hong Kong branch and asked to withdraw \$800. The man took his withdrawal slip, turned around and went up a flight of stairs to check on the account number. When he returned, and with few words, he opened a wooden box behind the counter and came out with eight \$100-dollar bills. A small stack of loose bills from a wooden box! A far cry from trying to cash a check for \$15 in Netcong, New Jersey.



On another occasion, a Philippine colleague in Viet Nam asked the **Footloose Forester** to buy him an expensive pair of shoes in Hong Kong and offered a signed check from his own Bank of America account in Manila. The Hong Kong branch acknowledged the legitimacy of the account and cashed the check. Colleague Balbino Roca got his pair of expensive Florsheim shoes, by way of Hong Kong.

Not all stories about banks and bank employees are upbeat. The German woman who made an entry in his Bank of America savings book in Hanau credited him with \$100 dollars more than he actually held in the account. When **Footloose Forester** asked her to double check the balance, she quite arrogantly stated that bank employees don't make mistakes. You just can't make up some things, one reason why that episode in 1963 stuck in his head. Nevertheless, she did take the deposit booklet into the back room and soon came back with the corrected total. Did she acknowledge her mistake? Of course not.

The biggest screw up turned out to be a howler. The **Footloose Forester** bounced a check for \$5,000 at a car dealership in Gainesville, Florida. Before he departed the University of Florida with his Master's Degree in Forestry, he planned to hit the road with a new car. The Chevy dealership in Gainesville accepted his personal check on a local bank as partial down payment, with the intention of using his Bank of America check as final payment upon delivery of the car. They held the BofA check, awaiting the delivery of the Chevy Vega from a regional distributor. Oh, the dealer's representative was proud to hand over the keys after checking it out himself prior to handing the keys over. We left Gainesville for good the following day, as part of the plan to get... *On the road...again!!!* Maybe we should have delayed a bit. The Chevy Vega was out of alignment and should never have passed their dealers inspection. It cost plenty to do an alignment, and although the Chevy dealer in New Jersey fixed it, they flat out refused to accept the work under the terms of warranty. A bitter lesson learned. But we had one good, last laugh. The BofA check for \$5,000 bounced.

Bank of America, in its San Francisco office did not transfer the sum of \$5,000 from his Auburn, California checking account into his Gainesville, Florida checking account, as requested some 2-3 months prior. Instead, they mailed him a check for \$5,000 to his erstwhile mailing address in Viet Nam (with an APO San Francisco address). It took a couple of months to even find out what happened, when he opened his forwarded mail to find a check made out to him, and not transferred between banks. Yes, the car dealer eventually got his money. And he had a story for the ages. Some stories you just can't make up and this was one of them.

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*By Dick Pellek*

## BUT DON'T TAKE MY WORD FOR IT

Trolling the waters of Internet social sites leads to the realization that among the millions of people who choose to respond with comments, there are the cautious ones, the reckless ones, the thoughtful ones, and the intemperate ones. Their comments, especially among sites that invite political commentary, are often short, punchy, on point, and clever. Or not. However, if ever the politicians wish to better understand what We The People think, they can learn a great deal from reading selective comments and hopefully learn from them. That is not to say that everything posted on line by common citizens constitutes inspired wisdom. Much of the commentary can readily and justifiably be culled. Be especially careful of the trolls and the political hackers who purposefully deceive us. But don't take my word for it. Nonetheless, the Internet is truly a place where everyone can learn, even if the posted content is largely opinion. We The People are, after all, a multicultural society composed of people who are cautious, reckless, thoughtful, and intemperate. Among other things. Not to mention well educated, or moderately educated, or poorly educated. Everyone has an opinion and deserves to be heard. Not all opinions, however, carry equal weight. We alone decide on their merits, and that brings us back full-circle to our current state of world affairs.

Should opinions trump facts? In politics, at least, it seems that well-crafted and heavily marketed opinions hold sway most of the time. Verifiable facts are essential as proof of the pudding, so to speak, but in the final analysis the acceptability of the pudding itself is a matter of taste, and taste is subjective.

This chronicle is also about opinions and thus is subjective in many regards. But it also highlights empirical facts that can readily be acknowledged even while being debated. Whereas science prides itself as being fact-based and objective at its core, there is plenty of room for subjective discourse. As perhaps the best

example in these contemporary times of scientific debate, the issue of climate change is not only on the front burner, but the status of the debate itself impacts how society reacts to and makes adjustments to climate change. But don't take my word for it. Analyze the circumstances for yourself.

The environment is another issue that comprises both objectivity and subjectivity within the parameters of a putative debate. Objectively, nobody will deny that we live in a world that nurtures us in an inherited environment that has allowed us to exist and to thrive. As the world population has expanded and transformed the very landscapes on which we reside, it is undeniable that we humans have altered our environments.

One may presume that the word "environment" should be considered in a general way, but when we look closely it becomes evident that there are many subdivisions of the grand domain we casually refer to as the environment. There is the air, there is water, there is land; furthermore, there is dry land, wet land, flat land, mountainous land, and frozen land. By the hand of man, we have altered our environments, both the seas and the land. We have become the stewards of the land and of the seas but over thousands of years we have altered the many environments that we have inherited, sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worse.

Just recently, one trending media site posed a question to anyone who was willing to provide an answer. The unadorned Question-and-Answer site named Quora asked, "How are humans being influenced by environmental factors?" A simple, straightforward question...too simple because there are many answers.

We are being influenced by the passive environments we inherited, and we are being influenced by the environments we have altered. Where to start? Do we start with the passive and ambient factors in our air? There are background levels of pollution from decomposing vegetation and emissions from volcanoes, methane releases from melting permafrost, from dust storms, etc. Or do we start with the factors of our altered air quality and temperature control through air conditioning, ventilation system filtration and artificial shading?

Water as part of our inherited environments is no less a consideration when describing the complexity of our earthly resources. Sea water, lake water, river water, rain water, and ground water are all different entities with respect to their loci of occurrence, available volumes, and their chemical compositions—despite the similar physical appearance. How we steward one of our most precious resources is vitally

important if for no other reason than the fact that humans can and do regularly pollute and poison our waters on a grand scale. It does not require special equipment or training. All it takes is carelessness and inattention.

Land is the one natural resource that humans understand the best because we all have, without exception, a life-long exposure and personal knowledge of one kind of land or another. A land environment is no less complex, however, due to the combined variables such as annual temperature regimes, precipitation, native vegetation, topography, geologic features and the underlying minerals that so feverishly drive us to deface our landscapes. But don't take my word for it. Survey the land for yourself.

Despite the wealth of its resources on the surface and under the surface of our land environments that have allowed us to prosper by developing our lands, much of earth's land surface is remote, vacant, inaccessible, or prohibitively expensive to develop. But don't take my word for it. Others have come to the same conclusion.

So, how have humans been influenced by environmental factors? We alter them, or try to do so. Within reason, that is not a bad policy. If we did not fight against naturally occurring disease, we would not live as long as we do. If we did not raise the air temperature in our homes during the winter, we would be very cold for extended periods. If we did not cool the air in the summer, there would be widespread discomfort. If we did not take pains to ensure that we are drinking clean water, the water that we inherited as part of our total environment would definitely influence our health. If we did not study and understand genetics, there would be no new fruit or flower varieties, no resistance to the basest of environmental constraints that regulate growth and development. There would be no transplantation of species into other climatic regimes, no adaptations of man or animal to climate changes. But don't take my word for it.

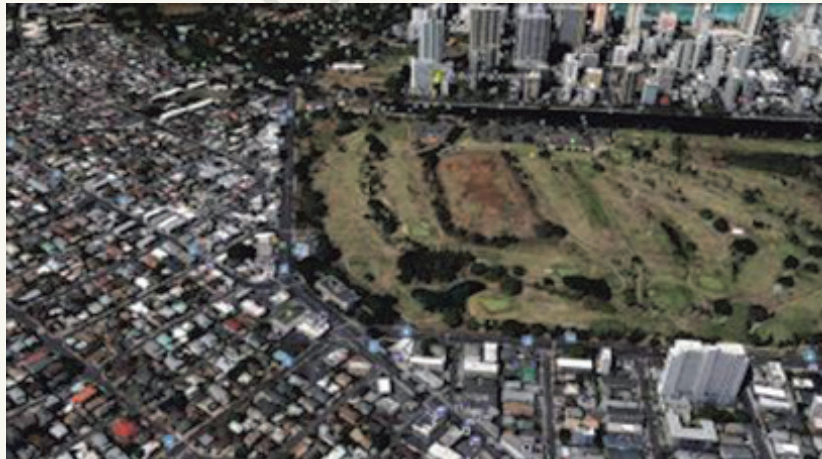
Humans are the creatures with the cleverest brains. We are born into this world that is structured with a variety of environmental factors and biological imperatives. At their core, the environmental factors cannot be erased, but they can be altered. Likewise, biological imperatives concerning life functions cannot be erased, but they also can be ameliorated to permit us to grow and thrive. We The People have to learn about what can and should be adapted, and what should not. But don't take my word for it.

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## CANAL HOUSE

The intention of this chronicle was to document with Google Earth screenshots one or more of the places where the Bengal Tiger and the **Footloose Forester** once lived. When they were successfully captured and put into the appropriate Travel or Business/Career portfolios, the intention was then to use them as graphic and reference sources to be inserted into other stories.

Upon reflexion, it was apparent that this chronicle would also qualify for the Coincidence portfolio, or the Defining Moments portfolio. Multiple uses for Google Earth satellite photos are so varied that the **Footloose Forester** realized that he could kill several birds with one stone, and with one Google Earth screenshot. Let me explain.



Canal House marked with yellow stick pin

The first task was to take a picture of the student housing where we lived when **Footloose Forester** was attending the University of Hawaii as an East-West Center grantee. All of the residents at Pakikona student housing were EWC grantees. They came from Fiji, Thailand, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Tonga, Indonesia, the Philippines, and the USA; just to name the ones we remember. We can't remember all of their names, but we can remember 420 Olohana Street because the number is shown on the Street Level view, thanks to Google Earth.

Also, on the same day he decided to capture a Google Earth photo of his erstwhile condo building up the street, as it were, adjacent to the Ala Wai Canal. We also lived there a few years later. As coincidence would have it, he learned that just before this chronicle was begun, there had been a fatal fire in an even larger Honolulu condo nearby. He knew that with the Google Earth 3-D view, and by navigating the screenshot, he could also see the other condo in the same large-scale screen capture scene. It worked. Henceforth, when he shows someone the scene of his old condo building (named the Canal House), he can pan the scene to show them the Marco Polo, the condo where three people perished in a high-rise fire.

The movements around Google Earth photos employ archived, still photographs, but when the computer mouse points to other features on an expanded scene, it is the second-best thing to seeing the story in real time.

With practice, regular computer users can incorporate Google Earth features into personal stories that have accurate and realistic geospatial significance. This July 2017 chronicle gets filed into the Defining Moments portfolio.



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## GADABOUT AND GADFLY

When the **Footloose Forester** was finally ready to fill in the biographical content for the cover of his third memoir: *Acer rubrum to Zyzphus jujuba: Volume II* in early 21016, he used the word gadfly as an adjective of self-description pursuant to his purpose in making two separate volumes. Although he more properly might be labeled as a gadabout (one who flits about from place to place, country to country), he deliberately chose the word gadfly to describe in part his mindset regarding his archives of selected memoirs. Yes, his inadvertent work history as a gadabout would fit the pattern of previous stories from Afghanistan to Zambia, Belgium to Botswana, or Madagascar to Malawi; but a personality trait describing him as a gadfly was also appropriate. No doubt, the gadfly label (someone who is regarded as persistently annoying or irritating) was an apt descriptor for a **Footloose Forester** who kept notes on why things worked or didn't work; and his personal spin on the spin some people put on things that they didn't want to discuss or put into official reports. There were lots of reports and some of them that were joint reports didn't always jibe as regards hidden meanings and operational context.

Pointing out flaws in the personality of others is certainly taboo in professional life but pointing out flaws in the basic concepts in their reports, and hence in the workings of subsequent programs and projects, should not be taboo. Yet, the **Footloose Forester** was often a gadfly because he couldn't ignore and dismiss the obvious errors he saw in reports that led to flawed programs and projects. Once in a while the errors were recognized and corrected by others, and sometimes they were not.

Sometimes the errors in concept led to errors in policy implementation and public presentations; and sometimes not. In a few cases the uncorrected errors were inserted into scientific papers that were subsequently published and hence became public information. Once in the public domain, it is difficult to



change the level of acceptance regarding the veracity that is being challenged. In general, once a scientific paper has been published, it is all but hopeless to try and get it changed.

There are only a few examples that stand out as reminders about obvious errors that can be verified on sight in publications where the errors themselves are photographs that can be challenged. Indeed, in news magazines like TIME and Newsweek, ordinary subscribers are often the ones who point out the mis-identification of a person in a crowd, or at the scene of a confrontation. Seldom does the person who points out the error in identification also go on to explain how a mis-identification changes the context of the story itself. In the case of faulty photographic evidence in scientific publications, the photo or photos are usually part of the context of the main theme itself, thus the context could be seen differently when the photos don't support the theme.

Getting down to cases, some years ago (circa 1985) there was short article in a scientific journal about the effects of slope on soil erosion and how planted trees in agroforestry remedies helped to stabilize the soil in steep terrain. The article that was written by a researcher at Auburn University included a photograph of planted trees on moderately steep terrain but stated that the terrain being stabilized had a 40°gradient. Since the publication had already been in print for several years and the article had not been challenged during peer review, it survives today as an example of a misleading observation based on erroneous evidence. When the **Footloose Forester** discussed those issues with forestry colleagues from Auburn University some years later, he was met with a rather dismissive attitude. His objections were merely based on a suspect photograph that purported to show terrain with a 40°gradient, whereas he initially doubted that the gradient was even 40%. Foresters and others using Abney levels and other slope measuring devices are aware that both percent (%) scales and degree (°) scales are etched on the same internal wheels used to measure slope. A 40°gradient corresponds with 84%.

It was another peer-reviewed scientific article in a different year and in a different journal, and with another color photograph of agroforestry practices in steep terrain that caught the attention of the **Footloose Forester**, and another instance of playing the role of a gadfly. That one was about Haiti and the **Footloose Forester** was quite interested to read the article because he was actively engaged in agroforestry research at that time, with Haiti as his base of operations.

The editors of the Swedish journal AMBIO did, at least, acknowledge that they should not have approved the full-page color photo of a Haitian peasant on their cover page, a flashy cover that purportedly showed

agroforestry practice on steep ground. Since the context of the article was mostly about the appropriateness of agroforestry in steep terrain, a good photo could have made that point.



Contour planting of trees on steep ground helps to control erosion

As depicted, however; on the AMBIO cover, the ground the peasant was standing on was practically level, so the photo was misleading, if not pointless. Furthermore, the article frontispiece stated that the slope was 45%. It was so inaccurate that any layman could see there was nothing steep about the terrain. It did not take a gadfly to point that out.

The moral of this chronicle is about pointing out obvious inaccuracies in scientific papers helps to retain the credibility of agroforestry approaches. Using good photographic evidence helps the general public to understand that agroforestry at the individual farm level helps both the farmer and benefits the environment but; on the other hand, misinformation and weak evidence in the form of inappropriate photos do not earn support for the practical benefits that might be derived from agroforestry. Alas, it will take more than an at-home internet search of archives to come up with the original photos to substantiate the presence of the errors that went undetected decades ago.

Being a gadabout in the Third World was not a qualification for commenting on the benefits of agroforestry but being a gadfly when it came to giving accurate information in scientific publications was certainly on the agenda.

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## STUPID COCONUT!

When the senior Swiss researcher saw a coconut that had washed ashore at high tide, he was delighted to know that he would soon have a fresh snack. Despite being in a tropical forest that most people would label as rain forest, the presence of coconut palms on peninsular Ujung Kulon was spotty at best, even along the miles of coastline that encased the peninsula that largely defined the boundaries of the heavily forested Ujung Kulon National Park. Although the primitive tropical high forest was designated by the Indonesian Government as a National Park as late as the 1990s, the area had previously been recognized as a game reserve that protected the habitat of the one-horned Javan rhino and other exotic animals such as panthers and Javan Wild Oxen.

Any one of the half dozen game wardens who lived and worked within the confines of Ujung Kulon would have snatched up the coconut; such was the rarity of seeing one on the ground during the course of their daily patrols. Even if it meant packing it all the way back home along the three-mile trail from where it was found, edibles were always appreciated, wherever in the forest they were discovered.

Alas, in the open glade living area on the adjacent island of Pulau Peucang where they lived and had their headquarters, there was but a solitary coconut palm tree to provide for their needs.

Supplementing their dietary needs was an obvious issue, but in past decades the management objectives of maintaining a nature reserve atmosphere precluded, or at least discouraged, planting fruit trees for their dietary needs. That, and the constant predations of mouse deer, rusa deer, and muntjak deer; wart hogs and Javan macaques that also lived on the tiny island; and all looking for food to supplement their own diets.

In contrast, the even much smaller island of Handeuleum only ten miles away by boat had at least 25 coconut trees that were planted and maintained by a much smaller game warden staff. Not only did the planted coconut palms provide fresh coconut water for drinking and coconut meat for a variety of prepared dishes, the few game wardens that tended the trees also sold excess coconuts at market on the mainland.

Inasmuch as the Swiss researcher who came to monitor the administration of a grant to Ujung Kulon National Park visited both Pulau Peucang and Handeuleum many times over the years, he knew plenty about how to husk a coconut, tap it for its water, and how to get down to the meat on the inside. Getting inside an older coconut with its tough husk is never easy. The older the coconut, the tougher the husk becomes. But getting cut with your own golok in the process does not make the coconut stupid. The researcher thought so, and he said so, “stupid coconut!”

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## LOBBYING TO BE JURY FOREMAN

An anarchist like the **Footloose Forester** does not like to take orders or give orders, so most times he stayed in the background and lived his life as a lone wolf who was content to challenge only himself while ignoring what other people did to elevate themselves in the public spotlight. One time, however; he found himself eagerly lobbying to get himself elected to the position of Jury Foreman in a criminal trial.

The case was a criminal trial of a suspect accused of breaking into his girlfriend's apartment, beating her senseless in a fit of drunken, jealous rage, and resisting arrest when her friends called police to apprehend him. The accused was on trial in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania for aggravated assault, as the most serious of the five charges against him. His girlfriend had a broken jaw as a result of his affection for her.

As often as **Footloose Forester** had previously been witness to circumstances where justice had not been served, he wanted to prevent a potentially indifferent and ill-informed jury from reaching a verdict that might not be linked to all of the facts in the case. Since he had spent countless weeks in full-day deliberations and numerous meetings over the years during which supposedly well-informed participants had reached conclusions not justified by the facts, he was honestly afraid that the upcoming trial would also be one of those in which poorly educated and opinionated jurors would try to sway others with their opinions; and not with the evidence at hand. He had been shocked at the number of times in the past that personal opinions had trumped facts in the settlement of an argument, a debate, or a policy deliberation. It didn't matter if the participants in those previous sessions were all college educated or not, people very often let their opinions rule their decisions. The **Footloose Forester** did not want to be a part of another demoralizing decision where facts took a back seat to a forceful speaker showering them with unsubstantiated opinions.

In the present criminal case, it was the physical evidence that formed the strength of the prosecution's case; but even then, it was clear enough that some jurors didn't think that the evidence was strong enough to convict. Before we could act as a single body of jurors, however; we were instructed to elect a Jury Foreman from among us. That is when **Footloose Forester** started to lobby in his own behalf.

As is quite typical in many groups, fully 9-10 of the others were not interested in being the foreman; or were diffident about taking on that role. Only one forceful male showed any interest in taking on the job. Fortunately, he did not convince others that he would be better suited to the task. For his part, the **Footloose Forester** mentioned to them that he had prior courtroom experience as an Expert Witness and had some acquaintance with rules of evidence and legal procedures. But the real reason why he wanted to be Jury Foreman was so he could establish the procedural guidelines whereby each and every juror had an equal opportunity to speak for as long as they wanted; and also the second-round opportunity to reconsider their views before casting their vote for guilt or innocence.

Harking back to those past decades, he recalled events when certain forceful speakers dominated conversations and debates to the point of winning the day through force major, not by their winning arguments. In his mind, the **Footloose Forester** presumed that this group was going to be no different in letting their personal opinions get the best of their ability to analyze the evidence. On numerous occasions in the past, he was not given the opportunity to speak while his colleagues or opponents had the floor—which they occupied for as long as they could; until the session was adjourned. To this day, he considers such tactics as unjust. **Footloose Forester** was determined to permit everyone to speak and was going to insist that they do so.

When he was elected as Jury Foreman, he had the opportunity to set down the guidelines that they would follow. Even so, our little jury pool did not convict on one count of a previous assault by the defendant on his girlfriend, because most of them said that the presumed evidence was hearsay, and not reliable. It was written testimony provided by two different people, but in the end, the **Footloose Forester** could not convince the other jurors that written testimony is a legitimate form of evidence. The case was not very contentious, however; and the defendant was convicted on four of the five counts against him. He is presently serving 30 years in a Pennsylvania prison.

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## LET'S GO SHAKE THE APPLE TREE

The Bengal Tiger was already in the branches of the Pennsylvania apple tree in the autumn of 2015 when she connected with the expression she had used some 44 years earlier. As she was about to shake the branches of the ripened red apples; and of the green apples on another branch, she smiled and said “let’s go shake the apple tree.” Back in 1971 it was a mango tree she had in mind, and we were enjoying the harvest of Itamaraca mangoes on the campus of the University of Hawaii.

On Sunday mornings after church in Honolulu, the Bengal Tiger would mull over our weekend agenda and during early spring it often came down to “let’s go and shake the mango tree.” She was always the first one to climb into the low, wide branches of the Itamaraca mango tree and give it the first shakes. As ripe, pungent mangoes fell softly to the ground, her dutiful companion would gather them up. So it was not so strange that 44 years later the Bengal Tiger was up in the branches of the apple tree and her soulmate was again on the ground collecting them. An hour later we also went to shake the nearby plum tree.

It was also not so strange that the Bengal Tiger had planted that grafted apple tree and had spent years pruning its branches and spraying for insects. When harvest time came this year, she formulated her plans to harvest, peel, slice, dehydrate and pack her beloved apples. Few people enjoy the fruits of their labor more fully than the Bengal Tiger. As this short chronicle goes into the public domain, the Bengal Tiger is still into the fifth round of drying apple chips.

The ongoing chronicles about her fruit trees might also include the pear tree that is not far away. In late August of the following year, there we were outside picking the 40 best of the pears that had ripened since we last visited our Pennsylvania home. It is a short tree and we didn’t need to shake it to select the



best fruits, but we gave it a shake or two just to re-enact the ritual that we had started in 1974. A couple of pears dutifully tumbled from the branches to the ground upon reciting the mantra, “let’s go shake the pear tree.”

The harvest season in Virginia also has many similar rewards. Picking ripe figs, persimmons, Fuji apples, and wild grapes—all at arm’s length; and then eating a few of them on the spot has always been a part of harvest ritual. Looking back over the years, we also remember harvesting and savoring strawberries, blueberries, lychees, malphighia, blackberries, cherries, currents, and Surinam cherries.

Chronicles about the Bengal Tiger are easy and enjoyable to update. That is because she is such a dynamic person, one who is always thinking about what to do next. So, a couple of weeks after the initial chronicle about shaking the apple tree began to settle into memory, the Bengal Tiger shifted into drying figs from the small tree astride our driveway in Virginia. Fresh figs are perhaps tastier, but they ripen so fast that we thought that we should try drying them in the food dehydrator. Bingo! It works great; and there are still a few dozen figs to be picked.

Not to be upstaged as a dried fruit snack, the next candidates were the large plantains we purchased at a local flea market managed by our Mexican neighbors 12 miles down the road. Most people know that plantains are not consumed raw, but even we didn’t know that when the ripened plantains are dried in a food dehydrator, the flavor becomes outstanding. That recent discovery is one reason why the Bengal Tiger is such an interesting person; she makes serendipitous discoveries on a routine basis--by her willingness to experiment and to explore. We are now in the process of making a video about how to prepare and save dried plantains.

The video about drying plantains was fun to make and we immediately committed it to YouTube for others to see. In the meantime, the Bengal Tiger is looking forward to shaking the two jujube trees outside our rear window. So far, they don’t require climbing to reach the crunchy snacks we anticipate in the upcoming harvest season. Last year, the **Footloose Forester** was able to bite into one by merely leaning forward and clamping his teeth on a likely candidate.

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## LOOKING BACK WITH MIXED EMOTIONS AND MEMORIES

Thanks to the photographic record, recalling a few details of the lavishness of Anh Sao's house in Viet Nam can be shared with others. As time passes, it becomes harder to reconcile the facts that brought us together, but photos make the stories more plausible.

Anh Sao had been a captain in the Army of the Republic of Viet Nam (ARVN) when that war raged in the 1960s and 1970s. Only a lowly captain at the time, he was also a professor at the Vietnamese equivalent of our US Military Academy at West Point. After the fall of Saigon in 1975, he became a refugee. Not long afterward, he came to stay (for about a year) with the Mother-in-Law of the **Footloose Forester** at our condo apartment in Honolulu, where he slept on the floor at nights and spent his days trying to open a restaurant. Sleeping on the floor in front of the open door to the lanai may have been humbling but Anh Sao was not the only one who did so. All of the 4-5 other male refugees who Tiger Dao took in following the war slept there on her floor until they adjusted to life in the USA. The refugees who made it as far as Hawaii knew about her; and she treated all of them as adopted sons.

Anh Sao did not talk much, but he quietly prospered. He opened a restaurant in the Makiki District of Honolulu that continues to thrive to this day. In the meantime, he went back and forth to Viet Nam as a businessman. Although the Communists are hostile toward the United States, they have always been practical enough to realize that many businessmen in the defeated South brought in valuable foreign exchange, and that included Anh Sao who decided to build an expensive home in the countryside where he eventually planned to retire. In 1997 the **Footloose Forester**, his wife Thu and her mother, the kindly Tiger Dao, were invited to that rural home near the village of Lai Thieu.

We were amazed at both the exterior and the interior, both of which were crafted according to Anh Sao's instructions. To say that his house was designed to suit him would be an understatement. Many of the features were so unusual that it would be more accurate to say that certain features were first designed, and then commissioned to be built. That included the ornate carved railing leading to the second story; and the large stone sculpture of a reclining Buddha that adorned one of the gardens at the side of the house.

In the photo below, the distinctive oriental design of the eaves gives a hint that his house was quite unlike most houses in the region. Although the Chinese style of architecture might seem appropriate in Viet Nam, it is not really commonplace. Anh Sao, however; had grown up in Chau Duc, a city with significant ties to Chinese culture.



Exterior scene of Anh Sao's rural home

A unique staircase in his house was something that Anh Sao had commissioned. Such a staircase was not something that one finds in a furniture store, thus he had it commissioned by an artistic craftsman with specific details in mind. In fact, many items both inside and outside were commissioned by various craftsmen.

The magnificent natural rock sculpture on the second floor is not one of the commissioned art works, but the water painting on the wall behind it is. A smiling Anh Sao was happy to show us around, while saying very little about his treasures.

One of the bittersweet memories that trip to Viet Nam in 1997 was rekindled when we visited the Three Bells Church near Saigon. That was where the **Footloose Forester** wed his beloved wife, the Bengal Tiger, in 1968. We had always wondered whether the Communists would destroy the 1:5 scale model of the SA-7 Saturn rocket that stood in the courtyard astride the church. Thankfully, they did not. We took a photo to mark the occasion. The caption of the photo reads: “**Footloose Forester** stands in front of church where he was married in 1968”

Mother Mary, the queen of heaven and earth, was the theme of the modern sculpture that was actually commissioned by the priest who married us. Father Peter Thanh had studied in the United States; and he had a lot of modern ideas.

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## RAIN SHADOWS AND RAIN FORESTS

On the one hand, you have those who believe in global warming; and on the other side of the divide are those who are currently labeled as climate change deniers. In the middle are those who believe that although climate change is real, the earth has always experienced natural climate change, so we should not be alarmed at the purported warming phase that most climatologists claim to monitor and document as our current state of affairs. But we can all agree that wild swings in weather patterns affect us in more ways than we may realize. Along the way, we always have to distinguish the real differences between what is due to weather and what is due to climate.

Local weather is just about the only thing we can grasp as relevant to our daily lives. Part of the problem is our short attention span, and part of it is about the complexity of categorical climate indicators. For the moment, at least; forget about the long-term fluctuations in climate and consider how daily weather patterns in our own regions of the country affect our daily lives.

There are big differences in temperature between northern and southern states of the United States, for example; and such differences have impacts in the way our houses are built, how our roadways are maintained, and how we conduct our everyday lives. Temperature differentials and how they define our lifestyles are most pronounced in winter months. The prospects of snow and ice in northern regions make for night-and-day comparisons with southern regions that may never or seldom experience such conditions. Temperature differences are merely the most obvious of the several factors germane to both weather and climate, but there are others to consider. Together with wind patterns, precipitation, barometric pressure and relative humidity; the overarching feature of our local weather is the fact that various regions of the country truly do have different climates.

Seldom do the folks who report the weather on a daily basis even mention the concept of climates as regards the United States as a whole; much less as a feature which partly defines various regions of the country. There are, nonetheless; several different climates in the United States.

A few obvious examples may suffice. The presumed daily weather in Hawaii is perhaps so implicitly known that it is not really necessary to say that the overall tropical climate of the Hawaiian Islands into which its daily weather patterns are embodied is fundamentally different from all of the other states of the United States. Yet, within the narrow limits of the temperature range of only a few degrees (also described as an isohypothermic condition) of large expanses of land at sea level in the Hawaiian Islands, there are other factors that affect the site microclimates within the many and varied landscapes. Rainfall and wind patterns are chief among those factors. That is where the gross generalities describing daily weather and climate get blurred. Whereas the concept of regional climate identifiers has not been too important in mundane discussions, the issue of site microclimate on a landscape basis has a sound scientific basis in helping describe how and why there are obvious differences in the existence and appearance of such disparate landscapes as forest, steppe, tundra, and desert. This discussion will be limited to only a few examples, but ones that are obvious enough to be appreciated by laymen who merely observe them without having to take measures to verify the concepts. The first and easiest example of a microclimate effect to perhaps contemplate is that of a rain shadow.

When one looks out from the balcony of a tall hotel in the Waikiki District of Honolulu towards the Ko'olau Range to the northeast, it is easy to see that the native vegetation on the range of mountains grades from dark green to ever lighter hues of green. Depending upon the time of year, the color gradation may even change from green to brown, especially in the vicinity of the St. Louis Ridge, overlooking Manoa Valley where the University of Hawaii is situated. The drastic color change is due largely to the ever-lessening amount of rainfall that hits the ground to water the plants. Whereas the average annual measured rainfall at the top of the Ko'olau Ridge may typically be 60-80 inches per year; upper Manoa Valley has approximately 40-60 inches; the lower part of Manoa may get only 30-40 inches per year; and by the time the remaining rainfall reaches Waikiki, its annual amount is in the 10-20 inches per year range. This is the rain shadow effect.

Although the top of the Ko'olau Ridge to Waikiki is only a few miles, the average annual rainfall varies greatly. One might surmise that Waikiki is relatively dry while the Ko'olaus are relatively wet. Between those extremes, one may also surmise that there is a visible line where the vegetation stays

green year-round and where it changes from green to brown when the rainfall is insufficient to maintain a uniform green color. The more-or-less distinct line formed in the dry season is a feature of the rain shadow effect, and it is real.

Rain shadows and snow shadows occur in other parts of the United States, although the weather broadcasters seldom discuss the topic. The phrase “snow belt” is far more commonly spoken, partly because laymen and climatologists alike can readily see and trace the comparative and differential snow depth, from place to place; and from region to region. Some people in northern states live in snow belts in winter months, and in general; those same zones are rain belts in summer months. Wind patterns drive moisture-laden storms, whether or not those winds bring snow or rain. Thus, some people live in snow belts and others do not. Some people live in rain shadows and others live beyond the features of rain shadows. And some people live in tornado belts, whose attributes are largely ascribed to the cause and effect of wind patterns and continental land masses like the Rocky Mountains.

While some of the viewpoints expressed above are the personal ones of the **Footloose Forester**, there are other well-informed observers who share those views. A friend and fellow tropical forester who lives in Costa Rica, Dr. Loren B. Ford, had this to say:

“Lake Effect” is another short-range weather effect close to the Canada-U.S. border, dumping huge depths of snow on such cities as Buffalo NY and Cleveland OH, and much of the windward sides of Michigan’s Upper and Lower Peninsulas. Chinook (Foehn) winds are another short-distance weather event associated with rain shadows, giving extreme weather events with occasionally mortal implications to wildland firefighters, such as in California’s 2006 Esperanza Fire near Cabezón CA; and the San Bernardino National Forest west of Palm Springs.

We lived too far east on the Lower Peninsula to get much lake effect snow, but still plenty, at times.

If people visited Washington State and traveled from Seattle or Olympia to Yakima, they’d believe in a rain shadow. Our weather here in the Central Valley of Costa Rica is affected by rain “shading” just about on a daily basis. Costa Rica is so small, with oceans to the east and west, that rain shadow effects occur if there is higher pressure in the Caribbean than the Pacific; or vice versa (being in the central valley, with Cordillera Volcánica Central to our east and tectonic coastal range to the west. Also, anybody who has visited both the Dominican Republic and Haiti should easily understand that the dominant easterly trade



winds provide much more rainfall to the DR than to Haiti. It doesn't seem that rain shadows should be hard to understand. But most people don't get much past the morning or evening weather report.

On an entirely different topic, the issue of what defines a rain forest is nonetheless dependent upon climatic factors; and microclimate factors in particular. Thus, while one might generalize that the western tip of Java has a tropical climate because it is wholly between the Tropics of Capricorn and Cancer, the microclimate effects such as elevation in the terrain, exposure to prevailing winds, and site-specific factors like aspect relative to sunlight all militate toward the conclusive reality that any spot on the ground is not the same as other spots on the ground nearby. This point is made merely to point out that although the climate may generally be described as tropical in nature, the local environments and ecological factors within landscapes are somewhat dependent on microclimatic features. To get to the point, a rainy tropical forest should not be classified as a rain forest just because it is in the tropics. Microclimates and microsites at sea level are not very similar to sites high up on the slopes of active or extinct volcanoes. Hence, one should be hesitant to label a tropical forest as a rain forest without considering a few qualifying factors that distinguish true rainforests, other than there is presumed to be abundant rainfall.

True rainforest has a minimum of 5000 mm of average annual rainfall, according to the classification system of the late Leslie Holdridge; and that pertains only to lowland (basal) altitude belts within the tropical zone of latitudes throughout the world. Since temperature decreases with rising altitude, the amount of rainfall at higher altitudes also changes at the same latitude. Thus, snow can be found at the top of Mt. Kilimanjaro, just below the equator in Tanzania; and on top of 13,803-foot Mauna Kea in Hawaii. And although Hawaii is also within the tropical zone as regards latitude with respect to the Tropics of Capricorn and Cancer, all of Hawaii has been classified as rainforest, according to one vegetation mapping system. There is definitely something wrong with that classification. The Waikiki District of the Island of Oahu, it should be remembered, experiences only 10-20 inches (254-508 mm) of rainfall on an annual basis. That is several times below the range of what Holdridge considered as rainforest.

Unfortunately, many generalists believe that rainforests are typical in tropical latitudes and those tropical climates are more or less the same. They are not, and they are not. Almost no true rain forests exist in Africa and precious few in other countries of the world. On the one hand, even climate specialists and plant ecologists may be forgiven if they lump moist or wet forests into the rainforest category—if and where the annual rainfall exceeds at least 2500 mm per year. Arbitrary boundaries are the constructs

of those who study climates, plant ecology and their interactions in the ecosystem; but real minimum boundaries do exist in nature.

As a personal note, one reason why the **Footloose Forester** is somewhat passionate about establishing real boundaries in regard to classification of both climates and plant communities is because Doctor L. R. Holdridge convinced him that plant communities, especially in the tropics, are expressions of the climatic factors to which they are exposed. Holdridge personally led his ecology students to witness the existence of tropical rainforest sites, tropical wet forests, moist forests, and even tropical dry forests—all within a hundred miles of each other in Costa Rica. It all has to do with what he professed as Life Zone Ecology. And he is precisely correct in most regards, when it comes to natural stands within the forests of the tropics.

Finally, the **Footloose Forester**, as perennial student and observer, cannot complete this chronicle without relating an anecdote to make a point. While on the trail in a magnificent wet forest in Gabon; and listening intently as a Deputy Director of the United Nations Program on the Environment lectured us about world forestry, he made the unconvincing point that he had personally seen both tropical wet rain forests and tropical dry rain forests. Say what?

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## BURUNDI, RWANDA, AND GENOCIDE

### Burundi is Rwanda's Neighbor and Shared the Same Genocide

In the first couple of years that the **Footloose Forester** visited the United Nations-funded government building at Rhuengheri on a regular basis, it was satisfying to know that the donor community was doing its part to keep a strong development agenda in Africa. Modern offices, modern laboratories, and current research agendas...The improvements in agricultural technique, management practice, production increases; and the prospects of a brighter future were all part of the job satisfaction that the **Footloose Forester** placed on his Burundi experience and made the country one of his favorites to visit as part of his official duties as a monitor in the Agroforestry Outreach Network.

But that was before the tribal genocides of 1992-93 in which almost 900,000 people lost their lives. Hutus on a rampage against the minority ruling class of Tutsis, in both Burundi and Rwanda. The result was a turning back of the clock and a prohibition against US development workers even entering those countries for more than a year. In the meantime, the Government Building at Rhuengheri was taken over by some 600 refugees who were seeking protection from murderous bands seeking to kill them.

People back home in the United States perhaps better remember the genocide in neighboring Rwanda, by the same two tribal groups and with the same intensity of killing. The movie "Hotel Rwanda" put the circumstances in a pretty accurate perspective. In Burundi, the circumstances were almost identical but, to date, the **Footloose Forester** has never heard or seen a historical linkage made to the ancient tribalism that actually overlapped in time and in proximate geography.



Lines of refugees fleeing for their lives; in Rwanda and in Burundi

After he returned to Burundi in 1994, **Footloose Forester** toured the border region with a French development worker who showed him where entire villages were deserted as Tutsi villagers fled across a narrow river into Zaire. Hutu gangs came to his house and demanded to use his pick-up truck. Whatever reason they gave, he knew that they intended to hunt for Tutsis. Since they were hostile and heavily armed, he told me he had no choice. And the **Footloose Forester** never did go back to Government Building at Rhuengeri.

Many stories posted by the **Footloose Forester** come from his old computer files. This one was so difficult to write that he was reticent to re-live that horrible period. And quite predictably, tears were forming as he added these last lines. Legacy Stories is, however, about our memories of the past. Let us never forget that we are here on earth to love one another.

Upon re-reading this short chronicle in late 2017, the tears came again. All men are brothers and all women are sisters. Why do we treat each other with such cruelty?

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## WE KNOW NOT THE DAY NOR THE HOUR

The value of an internal editor like the one in LegacyStories.org comes to the fore when we wish to reflect. Today in mid-January 2018 I used that capability to retrieve and share a heartfelt expression of familial love with my family. We lost Donald Johnson at the age of 53. There is an emptiness in my heart and I want to let my family know that we are all a bit poorer in losing someone who we can see in our minds eye.

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## CAPE VERDE HAS WONDERFUL PEOPLE AND MANY PLEASANT MEMORIES

### C is Cape Verde

A three-year sojourn to the windblown islands of Cape Verde came shortly after a 20-word telegram of a job offer was accepted by telephone; and the subsequent packing was completed. By all means, the nature of the job was briefly explained in an interview with the US Department of Agriculture project officer in Washington, D. C., on a three-day job hunting trip early in 1980. But it seemed too casual when the man behind the desk opened a drawer to retrieve a list of possible employer representatives. He asked, "how about the University of Texas? No, they got the last one... well then, how about New Mexico State University?" It was OK with the **Footloose Forester**, so after a quick call to Las Cruces, New Mexico, it was confirmed that they would be his Participating Agency Service Agreement employer representative. The **Footloose Forester** has never yet set foot in Las Cruces, although he often roots for the Lobos to crush the Texas A&M Aggies.

To this day, the **Footloose Forester** remembers the Cape Verdeans as his favorite Africans. There are no tribes there, but there are various groups that are distinguished more by color differences than by hints of tribalism. Cape Verde as a nation came into existence only after more than a hundred years of Portuguese rule, and the fact that escaped slaves who hid for years in the rugged hills could not be recaptured or tamed. Slaves were sought as deck hands on whaling ships, and the historical imprint of the whaling industry in the United States would take one directly to Plymouth and New Bedford, Massachusetts where more Cape Verdeans live today than in any city of Cape Verde. Formal independence came only in the 1960s when Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde were freed of Portuguese rule. To their credit, nearly all

of the armed fighters came from Guinea Bissau, but the diplomats were mostly Cape Verdeans. A Cape Verdean became the first President of Cape Verde and Guinea Bissau.

As the gentlest of people, the **Footloose Forester** has ever known, that is also to their everlasting credit. It was easy to love them, and he and his wife Thu did. Daughter Lucy Pellek was a Christmas present to them in 1983, some months after she was born in a cement warehouse in the desolate valley named Flamengos, on the Island of Sao Tiago. That building is still standing and can be viewed on a Google Earth satellite photo at map coordinates N 15°09' 17.90" and W 23° 38' 10.64". Lucia was the name that **Footloose Forester** gave her nearly eight months after her birth and well after he and Thu were asked to be godparents.

Naming a godchild was one of their responsibilities. The long delay before baptism was uncomfortable for everyone but it took so long because the parish priest refused to baptize her until the natural parents completed religious instructions to his satisfaction. They were nominal Catholics but did not attend regular service because they lived so far by foot from the nearest church. After the priest was satisfied with their intentions to raise her with religious values, Lucy was baptized in the coastal village of Calheta do Tarrafal. Soon afterward, Lucy came to live with the Pelleks at their newly built home at Sao Jorge dos Orgaos, a research facility where the **Footloose Forester** carried out his assignment as Soil Conservation Specialist.

Lucia Gomes Aguiar became Lucia Pellek after an in-country adoption process that took only five weeks. We had previously tried for five continuous years to adopt a Vietnamese girl from an orphanage in Viet Nam, but that adoption attempt ultimately failed. Then we tried for a full year to adopt a girl from Korea, but we were finally turned down because we were considered too footloose for their liking. So, it was remarkable that the Cape Verdean adoption was finalized, from start to finish, in only five weeks.

Thu will be remembered there as Dona Thu, the Asian lady who introduced purple sweet potatoes to the country. It is not a reckless claim. Thu's mom in Hawaii sometimes ignored the phytosanitary rules of the US Department of Agriculture by sending us fruits and vegetables in the mail. One time the package contained several sweet potatoes. Thu saved some of the growth buds and propagated them in a jar. Later, she gave them to our neighbor who was the farm manager; he, in turn, then distributed them to local women who grew the vines and later planted the rooted material. The following year one of the Cape Verdean women announced that the experiment had been successful and returned to Thu a basket



of large, delicious tubers that were heretofore unknown in Cape Verde. And from that time, the purple sweet potatoes were known as Dona Thu's variety. Mom had also sent along a half dozen mangosteens, the favorite tropical fruit of **Footloose Forester**. Mom was always unpredictably generous.

Dona Thu was also generous with sharing rides. We had a pick-up truck that we shipped from Pennsylvania and when there was not enough room in the cab, she would let folks hop into the open bed. One of her riders, however, was one she looked for and one who sometimes waited for her. He was a farmer who lived in a tiny village just at the bottom of a steep hill outside of the main town. He would wait by the side of the road or walk slowly with the support of two shovels, used as crutches because he was severely crippled. Sometimes she would see him standing there as she descended the hill; other times she would see him making his way along the road on his way to his field. As she approached she would slow down and stop. He would stop and without looking at her approach he would softly call out, "Is it Dona Thu?" In addition to being crippled in both legs, he was blind. That bond with Gomes and that memory will never disappear. No wonder the Cape Verdeans loved Dona Thu and no wonder that the **Footloose Forester** wanted her in his life and in his memoirs.

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## LIFE LESSONS IN THE MAHJONG TILES

Who among frequent computer users does not occasionally play a game or take an anonymous on-line quiz? Call the practice a diversion, a habit, or an addiction...but one thing is clear, the games and the quizzes are challenges. And challenging ourselves is a healthy concept.

When he was being interviewed by Peace Corps staff prior to being accepted as a volunteer scheduled for service in Pakistan, the **Footloose Forester** was asked what he did in his spare time; and later on, during an in-service evaluation, he was queried about whether or not he was getting sufficient mental stimulation as part of his assignment. Those inquiries were pertinent from the standpoint of finding a balance between maintaining enthusiasm and boredom. Today, the pertinence of balance between enthusiasm for life and boredom with our circumstances has not changed. Nobody is immune or excluded from a desire to be satisfied with our lives. At a higher level, many of us want to excel beyond the point where we think we are and where we think we should be. All of that requires mental stimulation, however unstated and personal that may be. Personal challenges like computer games and quizzes fit the bill because we can access them when we are in the mood and/or when it is convenient in our daily routines.

On-line Mahjong is one pastime that the **Footloose Forester** has come to realize as a daily session of mental stimulation. Among the many offers to download Mahjong games from the Internet, the one by Microsoft that is pre-loaded in Windows 10 is perhaps the most challenging. Indeed, one option offered for play is called the Daily Challenge. In that option, there are games labeled as Easy, Medium, Hard, and Expert. When you bite on that option, you come to realize that not everything is as cut-and-dried as you might think. Not all of the easy ones are really easy, the first time around; nor are all the hard ones quite as difficult to conquer as he had imagined.

There are plenty of lessons in the games, and plenty of ways at looking at the challenges, in general. If one approaches life with the attitude that you can do this or that, the odds are that you can. But Nothing Ventured-Nothing Gained is one of the lessons hiding in that decision. If you approach a challenge with trepidation and the secret fear of failure, chances are you may not ever attempt the difficult ones.

If the Mahjong game is labeled Easy and you win without hesitation, the payoff goes beyond the mental stimulation of taking on and meeting the challenge. Your subconscious tells you that maybe you should strive for a higher challenge. If you try, you may fail but if you don't try, failure is guaranteed. On the other hand, you may find that even the games that are labeled Easy are not always winnable the first time around. Life is like that. If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.

High school Seniors who are contemplating going to college harbor plenty of misgivings about their chances of getting in, or of getting accepted to the college of their choice. Except in a few cases where having "connections" may secure acceptance in prestigious colleges, the diffident Senior must rely on pre-qualifying for college admission by virtue of a solid academic record. That is not to say that even a superior score on entrance exams will guarantee acceptance at any college. Admission to college is more involved than it appears. Nothing is as easy as it seems. But if something is worth having, it is worth working for.

Playing Mahjong to win the Daily Challenge combines at least those three lessons. If the suite of three games includes Hard, Medium, and Easy the chances are that you may not win the Hard one the first time around. **You may fail but if you don't try, failure is guaranteed.** If you are determined to win, there is the old standby: **If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.** Besides, if your session of mental stimulation is meant to be serious and the theory of challenging yourself is truly worthwhile, consider the time well spent. **If something is worth having, it is worth working for.**

Mahjong may be a game but it is a stimulating one. In the final analysis, we have to accept the results of our efforts. We may win or we may lose, but we should acknowledge that we have accepted the challenges to win the ones we can win, accept defeat about the ones we cannot win; and seek the wisdom to know the difference. Stating it another way has its etymological roots in the words and life lesson of Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971): **God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.**

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## DUTY ROSTER

Family is important in Vietnamese society; and taking care of elders is one of the expectations one has while growing up in the Vietnamese culture. Xuan Thi Nguyen is now the oldest member of her clan of ten children; all of whom escaped the communist Pathet Lao in 1979; and all of whom now reside as refugees in Switzerland. Nearly all of them remain in the Luzern area where they keep an eye out for their mother; and all of them are caregivers who have taken extraordinary steps to ensure that one of them is with her at all times. The names of the caregivers and their time slots appear on a duty roster that is posted in their mother's living room.



Ba Xuan Thi Nguyen, Matriarch and mother of 10 (on left)

Ba Xuan Nguyen and her late husband Long Tran raised ten children in the vicinity of Vientiane, Laos in the years before the Pathet Lao communists took over in 1975. As a Vietnamese family living in Laos, they spoke Vietnamese at home and the Lao language around town. Of course, the younger generation of students spoke Lao exclusively while at school. The upshot of their mixed cultural existence was a community of shared values; Vietnamese and Lao. Twelve of Ba Xuan Nguyen's clan escaped Laos in 1979 and became refugees in a strange land. But that code of shared family values exists to this day, and a Lao Son-in-Law is also on the duty roster for caring for his Mother-in-Law.

If you visit the apartment of 82-year-old Ba Xuan in Emmen, Switzerland today, you will see the monthly duty roster of caregivers that is posted there. It reads, in German, something like this:

Mo (Monday) Di (Tuesday) Mi (Wednesday) Do Thursday Fr (Friday) Sa (Saturday) So (Sunday)

Linh (son)  
Chi (daughter)  
Dung (son)  
Son (son)  
Lien (daughter)  
Hanh (daughter)  
Kieu (daughter)  
Khamla (Son-in-Law)  
Binh (daughter)  
Thanh (daughter)  
Lien, again (daughter)  
Hoa (son)

The duty roster is filled in completely for 24 hours a day, every day; and it is changed by week, if necessary. All ten children are on the list, with Son-in-Law Khamla, a Lao, also listed as one of the caregivers.

It was a privilege for the **Footloose Forester** to meet each and every one of the loving children of Ba Xuan in Emmen; and to meet their father before he passed away. The united family he met in 1989 was an inspiration then; and continues to be an inspiration now.

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## PETS, WEEDS, AND INVASIVE PLANTS

There are so many ways to think about the animals and plants of this earth that it becomes haltingly tentative for anyone to embark on a meaningful discussion with concise, clear points of view. Both positive and negative thoughts are pre-packaged and readily available to any age group, to any economic class, in any culture; and regardless of a person's educational attainment or status in society. We all have opinions about such mundane things as various plants and animals and those opinions are seldom shaken during the course of our lives.

Firstly, let us briefly discuss the range of opinions regarding animals because animals are easier to understand as living creatures that most people have some personal experience with; and about which their opinions may readily be justified. One likely entry point of discussion focuses on pets. Most people are fond of dogs and cats. People who love dogs might overwhelmingly favor them over cats, for reasons that are not always explained. Cat lovers as a group gladly acknowledge their preference over dogs, and are happy to give reasons why. Plenty of facts can be summoned by either group to support their preferences, but many of the presumed reasons also have to do with their personal opinions about one group or the other. Facts and opinions abound; and those facts and opinions can readily be listed as either positive or negative. Overall greater acceptance or rejection of one group over another begins with changing opinions about the animals, not the facts about them.

Being a dog lover or a cat lover usually does not lead to animosity because it is possible to be both—an animal lover. Animal lovers tend to have a profound level of acceptance for many kinds of animals: rabbits, squirrels, birds, horses; and any manner of wild animals. Positive attitudes and positive opinions tend to blend into a sense of acceptance of the breathing creatures that share our world.

On the other hand, many if not most animal lovers do not love snakes, spiders, rats, scorpions or other poisonous creatures. The fact of their collective existence is one thing, but the opinions about them are something else.

Thus, human beings tend to cozy up to dogs and cats; but tend to shun or kill snakes and spiders. In a perverse and perhaps subconscious way, they are attempting to manage their local environment to feel more comfortable and secure. An environment that they go out of their way to foster for their own convenience or pleasure, at least in regard to how they interact with domestic animals that they can control.

When it comes to plants, humans must also deal with the facts of their existence and their personal opinions regarding what they think are positive attributes about them. But they also must also cope with what are negative attributes of plants. As for the positive aspects of plants, some of the issues are fundamental to our very existence. We grow crops to eat, or to feed other animals that we rely on. We maintain forest cover as a place that produces fiber for building material and serve as our watersheds. In that sense, we strive to alter our local environment on farms that produce our food; and in forests that produce building materials. Furthermore, we are obliged to change and improve our farms and forests if we are to continue to feed ourselves and sustain key renewable resources.

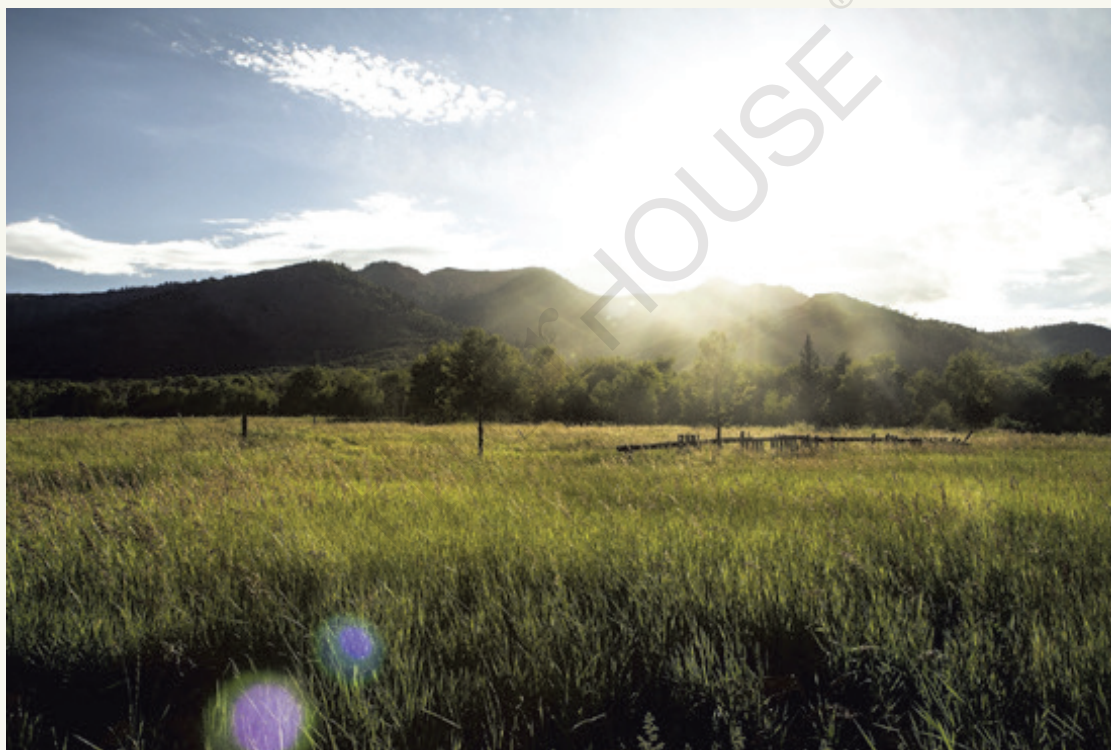
When it comes to dealing with the world of plants on the farm and in the forest, all of us exhibit one to three traits that evolve from our opinions regarding the importance of plant life. To have and to grow plants, we must either let it happen, help it happen, and/or make it happen.

In the case of trees and shrubs, we can choose to let it happen because in natural forests the various trees and shrubs found there have prospered on their own for centuries without our direct involvement. Our presumed forest management policy in natural forests is to let it happen, ostensibly derived from our opinions about plants in natural surroundings. When our preferences are for tree and shrub species that do not occur there naturally, we can grow them in botanical gardens, orchards, and plantations. Thus, we make it happen by selecting suitable, adaptable species by transplanting seedlings or growing them from seed. If and when disease threatens to wipe out our plantations or orchards, we can ameliorate the environment by countering the effects of disease, or destruction by fire, wind, or ice. In that case, we are helping it to happen.

When it comes to growing fruits and vegetables in places where they do not occur naturally, we have no other choice than to make it happen. Most vegetable crops are annual plants so must be planted every year in order to have a harvest every year. In the case of fruit trees, we first make it happen by planting in the beginning phase, but help it happen by fertilizing and nurturing the orchards during their formative years. We are also helping it to happen when we provide irrigation water and fertilizer, as needed.



Weeds, on the other hand, are on the negative side of the ledger of plant life. The range of our feelings about weeds is as strong as there are categories of weeds. Some formerly useful plants that escaped into a wild state of plant community existence can legitimately be labeled as weeds. One simple definition of a weed is a plant that is unwanted. Thus, the delicious fruit of the guava tree gone wild has become recognized as one the biggest weeds in Hawaiian forests, where it has thrived through seed dispersal by birds that eat the fruit. Even the commonly cultivated mango has become so abundant in Bangladesh that it is trending toward weediness in the landscape. Foresters in Bangladesh recognize it as one of the most important species currently supplying the timber market. After mango trees cease to produce fruit, they become weeds in the landscape.



Lines of *Leucaena* plantings on verge of becoming weeds

Some species of plants become weeds if they are not managed in the manner that serves their primary and intended uses. One of the previously recognized “miracle” trees used in regions of fuelwood shortage became a weed in the landscape when its growth and silvicultural imperatives were overlooked or

mismanaged. Originally used as cattle fodder in Hawaiian pastures and elsewhere, the leguminous *Leucaena leucocephala* grows fast and provides high protein content when it is cut young. If left to grow without regular cutting, it grows tall and becomes a large shrub or small tree. That is one reason why it became a darling in recent years in the agroforestry planting campaigns of fuelwood-short Haiti. Unfortunately, farmers who used it as a leguminous protein source in small plots; but did not keep up with cutting it back on a regular basis, saw their otherwise subsistent family plots turn into patches of *Leucaena* shrubs that were difficult to eradicate. The miracle agroforestry species became a major weed through mismanagement or lack of management.

*Leucaena* grows well in the tropical climates of Haiti and elsewhere. Today some 2-5 million hectares of land in several tropical countries suffer some aspects of its weedy tendencies. As the young shrubs continue to grow, they can be managed, but if the labor-intensive management does not keep pace, the dense family plots become decidedly weedy.

The fast growing *Leucaena* that eventually emerges into medium sized trees can, nevertheless, eventually become useful for fuelwood, poles, and light construction timbers—if the former garden patches are thinned and managed for those subsequent purposes. The **Footloose Forester** recalls seeing one solitary specimen of only a few years of age that was over 10 inches in diameter; and another of about 8 years of age that it was so big that the owner did not have the proper tools to cut it down and transport it elsewhere.

Small patches of *Leucaena* that were densely planted to produce animal fodder but were abandoned when they grew too woody and unpalatable for animals did not automatically flourish as sources of fuelwood without a conscious plan to thin them frequently, say every few years. Hundreds of fodder plots stagnated into pencil thin thickets that exhibited both stunted height growth and limited diameter expansion. At that stage and evermore, the miracle *Leucaena* became a widespread weed in Haiti. On the other hand, those few planters who recognized that *Leucaena* exhibited rapid diameter growth and grew tall in a remarkably short period of years were able to demonstrate that, with scheduled thinning of the plots from an early stage, they could produce a steady supply of fuelwood and building materials from their own lands. Woody plants are, after all, the world's most readily renewable resources.

What can be said about woody cultivated plants that become weeds can also be said about grasses. The highly productive Napier Grass (*Pennisetum purpureum*) that is important in the dairy industry can become

a noxious weed if it is allowed to escape beyond managed pastures. Thousands of hectares of otherwise productive farmland in several tropical countries have been supplanted with huge swaths of the menacing foliage that thousands of soldiers have come to know as Elephant Grass. Like many another escaped plant that originally had useful purposes in mind, Elephant Grass can legitimately be called both a weed and an invasive plant.

Just what should we classify as a weed? Something that is merely a minor nuisance? Some otherwise useful plants that escaped their confines to become uncontrollable large colonies? Unmanaged plant communities that are known to be noxious? Or just plants that have no known useful purposes?

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*A to Z Word Potpourri*  
*Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams*  
*Chronicles of a Footloose Forester*  
*By Dick Pellek*

## SOMETIMES RIDING IS NICE, SOMETIMES NOT

### Horses and Mules

Once in a while making a trip by horseback was preferable to walking, but not always. The **Footloose Forester** was only a sometime rider, so never got comfortable enough around horses and mules to actually want to ride them. First of all, there was all that gear; and the feeding. Usually there was someone else who responsibility it was to see to those things, but once in a while you were close enough to being without bridles, saddles, and feed that you wondered if everything was going to work out.

The dude ranch approach is rather reassuring to the novice, so there was a higher sense of ease when there were expert riders around who kept their eyes on their charges. Besides, the of riding stables usually took pains to match the temperament of the horses with the perceived skill of their riders; and most often scheduled the trips to easily manageable jaunts. The **Footloose Forester** didn't worry about those trips. He was more concerned about the ones that had distant sites as the objective of the trip, so having to rely on horses and/or mules to get us there. So, the inexperienced rider in the person of the **Footloose Forester** always wondered if he was up to the long ride; up to the challenge of steep trails; up for unknown river crossings; and all the while maintaining a mutually tolerant relationship with the horse or mule.

Riding mules are just as trail worthy as horses, perhaps more so. They don't seem as skittish as horses in rugged terrain; at least that is what the blissfully ignorant **Footloose Forester** always chose to believe. Of course, many mules are known to be stubborn so if he didn't want you on top, he didn't get labeled as a riding mule. The first mule that the **Footloose Forester** tried to mount let him know immediately that he wasn't a riding mule. The **Footloose Forester** doesn't blame the Forest Service packer who came along

with a horse and a mule and offered a way to make our trip into Desolation Valley Wilderness Area more manageable. He hadn't tried to ride the mule himself, since his horse was his regular ride and the mule was just his regular pack animal. We soon found out that the mule wasn't having any; and he unceremoniously dumped the **Footloose Forester** by scraping him against the side of a Ponderosa Pine tree.

Years later, the next mule did accept riders, and he was a welcome sight, standing tethered there at the end of the trail head that led to the remote fishing village of Tarrafal at the rugged western tip of Santo Antão in the Cape Verde Archipelago. The mule trail was the overland means of reaching Tarrafal with supplies, thus the crude hitching rack with three tethered mules might have seemed a strange sight so far from town, but it soon became apparent that transport by mules was the one and only practical solution. As we climbed higher and higher along the narrow trail to the top, the **Footloose Forester** became more grateful for the ride. He was recovering from a leg operation and wondered if his leg was up to the task if he had to finish the trip on foot. So, although he sometimes wanted to dismount and walk along the narrower sections of the trail, even dismounting at some places meant risking getting pitched over the edge and tumbling down into the rock outcrops below. One place was so dangerous, however, that the mule skinner/guide asked him to dismount before we reached that stricture where the trail was chiseled out from the shoulder of the ridge spine. At that point, and a few others along the way, the rider could touch the rock face with his left hand and spit into space on his right side. But the trusted mule made his silent way to the ridge line plateau above, where both man and animal breathed a sigh of relief. It was then that the mule decided to jump forward and down to a flat stretch. The **Footloose Forester** went sailing over to the mule's ears to land amid a group of sharp boulders. Hitting packed soil instead of sharp stones was a big relief, because we had not yet reached our destination. On the way back, the **Footloose Forester** was again thrown from that mule at that same point; when the cinch strap broke as the mule lurched forward to gain a foothold on the upslope.

Hours in the saddle of a gentle riding mule in Haiti was almost a pleasure, by comparison. Three missionaries who wanted to showcase their mission project in the steep headwaters region of the Artibonite Valley in Central Haiti were well-prepared for the trip. They had a small string of horses and mules that they used regularly when visiting their project site in the uplands. The pastor seemed a bit embarrassed to offer a mule as a ride, since the others had sleek, well preened horses for themselves; and fancy western saddles that actually flashed silver. Not to worry, the **Footloose Forester** wasn't planning to challenge them by racing along the trail. The missionaries were kind enough, however, to switch mounts from time to time, thus allowing him to rest his back by changing positions in a different saddle. It was a great trip.

Three days by horseback into the range management project sites in Lesotho was the biggest test of horsemanship that the **Footloose Forester** ever faced. If the Boy Scouts had offered a merit badge for riding skills, he would have earned it during those days. Even if he had no idea that so many challenges were going to be thrown at him, the tests were everywhere. The trail master, who was also the project manager, wasn't purposely trying to test the **Footloose Forester** in riding skills; he was merely extending his judicious sense of the competence level of his visiting evaluator, one stage at a time. But for the **Footloose Forester**, it was the equivalent of sink or swim. There were steep grades to scramble up, long sections where there was no trail; stream crossings that could not be easily predicted; and miles of solo testing where you knew that it was either pass or fail. And one time that challenged your ability to stay in the saddle as three horses challenged each other in a hair-raising gallop. The experience could have been painful, but in the end, it was one of those times that one looks back on with nostalgia. And so, it was another great trip.

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## RECYCLE TREES, TOO

Not everyone gets to recycle a dying sugar maple tree and convert it into a magnificent sculpture like the one shown below. But we are happy that Ray Langer knew what to do with his declining maple; and he did it. The hand carved American Eagle stump now proudly standing adjacent to Aten Road near Imperial, Pennsylvania once shaded the front lawn of his property and a portion of the nearby roadway where motorists rounded the bend heading to the top of the hill.



Because Ray as owner had an appreciation for the past, he decided to save the stump after the sick tree was cut down; and now allows it to serve a new role on the lawn in front of his house. Nowadays, he and his wife enjoy the sugar maple sculpture on a daily basis; and passing motorists are treated to the magnificent silhouette of the bird's proud beak as they drive by.



The choice of the angle to display his beak at the bending of the road was no accident. The sculpture artist knew exactly what he was doing when he chiseled the stump into its final configuration. Anything less than the silhouetted beak as you approach might have been wasted on most people who could easily fail to notice the mastery of its positioning.

Perhaps by paying respect for the past history of his own land and for the oil and gas wells that he watched over there, Ray Langer was making a personal statement about the other resources he was entrusted with. That may very well be the case, for every few years Ray conscientiously applies a coat or two of varnish to keep the American Eagle stump looking fresh.

If the name of Ray Langer seems familiar, his legacy of personal trophies also includes the oil and gas wells that are featured in the chronicle entitled, "On Oil and Gas Wells", as part of the local lore in the foothills in Western Pennsylvania.

The flame of burning methane just outside the residence of Ray Langer up the hill to the right, is testimony that both natural gas and oil continue to seep from the ground in the hills of Western Pennsylvania where Ray grew up. And from his front porch and down the hill to his left, the active oil well next to the Marriott Hotel is visible, so casual visitors can see the past and the present in one sweeping glance. Needless to say, the American Eagle sculpture represents both the past and the present. May it also have a proud future.

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## SOURCES OF THE NILE RIVER

Every 4<sup>th</sup> grade school child has heard about the Nile River. Most young ones know that it is in Africa; older students learn that it is the longest river in the world, at 4160 miles in length. It can be mapped from its arbitrary source at the outlet of Lake Victoria in Uganda; then it flows north through Sudan where it is locally referred to as the White Nile; until it is joined by a major branch and morphs into the Blue Nile at Khartoum, Sudan. Then it meanders more placidly through into Egypt before discharging into the Mediterranean Sea at Alexandria.

The narrow string of gushing water that is recognizable as a river spills out of Lake Victoria near the town of Jinja that boasts of being the source of the Nile. If one were to approach that outflow and look down into the water of Lake Victoria, you can see where the discharge current begins, just a few feet inside the border of the lake. Lake Victoria itself, however; is fed by hundreds of springs, rivulets and unnamed creeks originating in other countries. And that is where the controversy about the true source(s) of the Nile really is (are). As it turns out, the issue is a semantic argument. Folks in Jinja can show you the discharge current where the river takes shape; but people who live around Lake Victoria can explain why the many sources of the Nile River are elsewhere.

The issue is not merely a question of semantics. Since Lake Victoria, the largest lake in Africa, is composed of fresh water; its discharge into the Nile River is balanced by fresh water from springs and minor streams from the countries surrounding the lake. Kenya supplies more than 80% of the fresh water that feeds Lake Victoria; but Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi, and Rwanda also feed the lake with fresh water. Hence, there are more than a hundred sources of fresh water supplying Lake Victoria. As a result, the Nile River implicitly has more than a hundred sources. As a named river, however; it begins at Jinja in Uganda.

As an administrative entity, Lake Victoria is also broken down into sectors that recognize territorial claims on its resources by the member states that surround the lake. In terms of surface area of water claimed by the member states, Uganda has the largest share, followed in order by Tanzania and Kenya; with token representation by Burundi and Rwanda. That is not to say that disputes do not occur. During the tribal genocide in Rwanda and Burundi during the 1990s, dead bodies floated downstream in local rivers and ended up in Lake Victoria. The events were reported in local newspapers but not widely covered in the international press.

In happier times, the member states cooperate in joint-administration of the fisheries and other resources of Lake Victoria, including the monitoring of pollution and effluents that discharge into the lake and thus affect water quality. That issue is the downside of the story regarding the sources of the Nile River. If toxic effluents and pollutants enter Lake Victoria from the highlands of the member states; then the Nile River begins its journey north laden with unwanted contaminants. Nonetheless, the member states lay some claim to being the source of the Nile. That is not the end of the story, however. A significant volume of the waters of the Blue Nile downstream of Khartoum is derived from Ethiopia, hence; maintaining the traditional flow also involves the geopolitics in yet another country that does not itself lay claim to having upland sources.

The **Footloose Forester** has seen small signs at minor trickles of water in both Rwanda and Burundi announcing, "Source de Nile." Not the only source, to be sure, but a reminder that the majestic Nile River traces its origin from modest beginnings in the highlands of East and Central Africa.

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## A FEW SNIPPETS, THE STUFF FROM WHENCE LEGACY STORIES ARE BORN

- Ø That time in Germany when Lt. Nick Tompras fired off 250 rounds with a single pull of the trigger. It was an M-60 machine gun.
- Ø Stepping on the head of a rattlesnake in California. Bounding down a steep hill, was looking for a place to break my fall.
- Ø Bouncing down the long scree slope of volcanic ash on the east side of Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. It was like skiing moguls.
- Ø Paragliding above Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. Was high enough to see the famous monument close by.
- Ø Snorkeling close enough to a giant clam in Indonesia to watch as it closed its shell.
- Ø Looking up from the caldera floor of Vulcan Izalco in El Salvador.
- Ø Spending 1½ hours near an exhausted 23-foot python that had just consumed a rusa deer in Indonesia.



- Ø Descending with scuba gear to 118 feet below the surface to see one of the world's largest elephant ear sponges in Haiti.
- Ø Sleeping on top of a giant boulder in late winter in the Sierra Nevada mountains of California. The snow was 10 feet deep.
- Ø Eating deep-fried mopane worms in Malawi, and toasted silk worms in South Korea.
- Ø Going deep underground in a gold mine in South Africa.
- Ø Picking up chips of garnet and ruby at the mouth of a gemstone mine in Kenya.
- Ø Counting the full five minutes in complete blackness in an iron mine in New Jersey.
- Ø Finding an Indian stone hammer along the banks of the Kootenai River in Montana.

- Ø Fighting wildfires in the Parc National Oiseaux de Djoudj in Mauritania.
- Ø Spearfishing for langouste off the east coast of Costa Rica.
- Ø Drift diving and underwater cave exploration in Mexico.
- Ø Night diving at Hol Chan in Belize.
- Ø Ten days sleeping under my desk at Tan Son Nhut during the Têt offensive in Viet Nam.
- Ø Driving through an active range fire in Mali.

Getting started on a chronicle about any subject whatsoever means having an actual starting point. In the example above, the starting point was a bulletized list. In college, several of the professors advised using an outline; and over the years a few team leaders in consulting projects actually insisted on seeing all of the working outlines of proposed project documents prior to submitting the combined initial drafts for eventual refinement. It was team consulting and team writing.

Key steps necessary to construct interesting legacy stories also make use of a few fundamentals and follow certain procedures. The steps are not necessarily consecutive but once a completed story is reviewed and analyzed in retrospect, it becomes apparent that key elements and ingredients were in the development mix. They include: picking an interesting theme; developing an outline or framework; adding and embellishing ideas that may need some detail in explanation; correcting the spelling and syntax as you proceed; re-organizing pertinent sentences and paragraphs into logical chronological order, as necessary; and completing the first draft.

Once a clean draft is finished, it is important to read it, re-read it, evaluate it, and edit the draft. One of the beauties of the internal editors in social media sites like LegacyStories.org is that the writer can make changes in the text months and even years after a story was drafted. This chronicle is an example of that possibility. The chronicler who calls himself the Footloose Forester never intended to pass off his bulletized list as a legitimate chronicle entry. He believes that the hoped-for delicious taste of a story that he intended will Instruct: Inform: and Entertain and should have a proper recipe.

Baking a tasty story is much like baking a batch of brownies. There are various recipes that will satisfy our taste buds, but there are several ways by which things can go wrong. As taken from a previous entry of the Chronicles of a Footloose Forester:

**Excerpt from: A Recipe for Becoming a Writer, entry in Legacy Stories on 6 November 2012**

In the end, it all depends on what recipe tastes best when mixed and baked according to the directions, including adherence to the correct time and temperature in the oven...What does any of the discussion about brownies have to do with writing, or becoming a writer? At the heart of the matter is the equivalence of principles that compose the ingredients that make good brownies, or good writers.... Accomplished writers are people who know what the ingredients are and use them in various recipes that appeal to the consuming public of readers.

A would-be writer must start with knowing what ingredients are proper for the recipe of the item(s) one wishes to promote and share; then to assemble the blend of ingredients in proper amounts, and at the proper times. Knead the dough of storyline into a bowl of appropriate substance, smoothly blend in bits of local color, add a pinch of WOW factor, and a sprinkle of suspense. Blend the ingredients so that they are not too stiff, nor too thin. Strong vocabulary words may be preferable in some cases, but the taste should not be overpowering. The food should not only taste good, it should look good. Sometimes the recipe calls for setting certain ingredients aside; and adding them later. That is why getting the reader's interest starts with flavorful ingredients that are blended in such a way that they are neither lumpy nor runny, thus can be ladled into the mold designed for the expected product. Good syntax is the main blending agent. Use as needed, to avoid lumpiness. Visually and psychologically, huge brownies and long paragraphs are not the most appetizing, so should be avoided. On the other hand, tiny pieces do not satisfy one's natural appetite when that particular hunger pangs.

When the brownie mix of a story is ready for baking, double check to make sure that it is not so short that it is dismissed as insignificant; nor too long such that it may never be finished before it becomes stale. As an example, and despite their grandeur as confections, wedding cakes are beyond consideration for an individual, just because of their size. But brownies are just the right size and have fairly predictable qualities. And anybody can make brownies, as long as they follow the directions.



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## IT PAYS TO READ LABELS

Advertisers have been doing it for decades. Putting nutritional information on milk cartons and cereal boxes, assembly instructions on the back of pre-fabricated office furniture pieces, and even pictures of the birds that your freshly purchased bag of bird seed will attract. Thank you, Royal Wing brand of bird seed, for the colorful pictures of the species of birds that are attracted to the nyjer seed in the woven plastic bag that we recently purchased.

It has been said before in these *Chronicles of a **Footloose Forester***, but it bears repeating once again.... truth is stranger than fiction. Were it not for the combined photo of a goldfinch, a purple finch, and a pine siskin on the bag; the **Footloose Forester** might not have learned to identify a pine siskin. But a few days after the finch feeder was filled with nyjer seed from that bag, three distinctly different species of bird came to feed at the same time. There were two goldfinches, a purple finch...and two pine siskins. Truth is stranger than fiction.

The finch feeders shown above are quiet now, but the birds will be back. We hope that when they return, those visitors will be goldfinches, purple finches, and pine siskins.

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## DONA THU STARES DOWN A MARINE

Gorée Island, Senegal

During a 2-month extension of the Environmental Impact Statement phase of the Senegal River Basin Project, wife Thu joined with **Footloose Forester** and packed her things for a new adventure. We were lucky enough to get a place to stay in a private house on Gorée Island, about three miles east by ferry boat from the capital city of Dakar, Senegal. You can find our rented house with Google Earth at N 14° 40' 04.67" and W 17° 23' 55.16".

It was possible each workday to return to Gorée during the long lunch "hour", because the ferry service was reliable. Usually, however, he settled for taking along a snack and using his lunch hour (more like two hours) to explore the city or do some limited shopping. Most shop keepers closed their doors during the heat of mid-day but opened later and stayed into the early evening hours.

The sheltered bay that formed a semi-circle near the Port of Dakar was the anchor home of a Russian fishing fleet. Their fleet consisted of 4-6 boats, one or two of which were factory ships that could process the catch and remain on station until the freezers were full. It was said that the fleet remained there for over two years, but that individual crew members could return home once every six months. We passed by them in the ferry so often and so close that we were sometimes able to recognize a few faces. When they had free time, some of the Russian fishermen (and a few fisher gals) would come to Gorée to swim in the placid bay adjacent to where the ferry docked.

We also liked to bask on the beach there, mostly on Sunday mornings when there was no office work to be done. Come to think of it, Thu spent enough time in the blazing sun in those days that she came back to the USA with her hair sun-bleached auburn red.

It was during one of those leisurely basks on the beach on a Sunday morning that Thu became a folk hero to the people of Gorée. As we lay there chatting, two young Senegalese pre-teens got into a scrap with each other. Fists flew but only a few of the blows landed. In any case, a swaggering Marine in his military trousers and combat boots came along and pulled the kids apart. Then he started to beat on both of the boys. When Thu saw that, she jumped up and immediately pulled him off. Then she got into his face. As he lay there trying to decide whether his Bengal Tiger wife was going to be able to resolve the dispute herself and without help, a few sweaty thoughts crossed his mind. The first was.... if he hits her, then the **Footloose Forester** hits him, then the next was... if the **Footloose Forester** hits him, then the **Footloose Forester** goes to the hospital. As it turned out, the tough-guy Marine backed down from her stand-tall determination and went slinking off in the other direction.

A few years later when we were assigned in Cape Verde, out in the Atlantic about 350 miles west of Senegal, we decided to visit Gorée during a layover for flight connections in Dakar, a main airline hub for much of West Africa. We passed through Dakar often enough and knew we could manage the ferry trip to Gorée. As we debarked from the ferry, a woman who lived in a house directly in line with the ferry dock, came out of her house and came up to us. She spoke to Thu in French, saying something like, "Thank you, Madame for helping my boy." One of those boys fighting on the beach that day was her son, and she never forgot that it was Madame Thu who saved him from a beating by a surly Marine.

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## EUREKA! KOA IS A SUPERSTAR

Getting to travel into rural areas in The Third World gives the traveler a perspective you won't find in the glossy photos of glamorous magazines. Whereas most people can relate to a stroll along the Champs-Élysées and under the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, or mimic tossing a coin into the Tivoli Fountain of Rome merely by thumbing through the pages of Condé Nast, some of the memorable sights in the remote areas of Third World countries are mostly confined to nostalgic reveries. Of course, everybody has their own lifestyle taste for travel and excitement. For a **Footloose Forester** who had a lifelong interest in “discovering” exotic trees and shrubs for the first time, the Eureka! moments were few and literally far between. And most of those moments were in The Third World.

The balsa airplanes of his youth turned into a Eureka! moment the very first time he saw a healthy young balsa tree in the forest in Costa Rica. And what he knew as a Texas mesquite tree turned into a Eureka! moment along the banks of the Senegal River in West Africa. Hundreds of California redwood trees along the streets of Geneva, Switzerland wasn't in The Third World, but it was a Eureka! moment when **Footloose Forester** first saw them up close.

Plant species are adaptable enough to be transported and grow successfully in many places in the world that are outside of their native ranges. To be sure, frost intolerant species from the tropics may not grow in tundra conditions, but there is every reason to believe that most species can survive in greenhouses, when temperature, humidity, and light requirements are understood and adhered to. In some fortuitous situations, imported and/or exotic species can thrive in the outdoor conditions and native soils in the landscapes of lands far from their native ranges.

Many countries have been growing plantations of exotic eucalypts and various imported pine species so successfully and for so long, that their presence in local landscapes might be taken for granted. Botanists describe those adapted species as naturalized. The list of naturalized plant species is long, although many of the species may or may not be uncommon. Of the more common names that are recognized as naturalized outside of their native ranges are eucalypts, pines, teak, ginkgo, and various acacias. This chronicle is about one obscure species of acacia that has a limited history of out-planting far from its native range. With any luck its spectacular success in Rwanda will become a botanical Eureka! discovery that encourages botanists and horticulturists in other countries to add it to their inventory of experimental plantings. Needless to say, performance may vary in various soils and in different climate regimes, but it just might be the next staple among fast growing, commercially important timber trees in tropical countries. In Rwanda it started out with completely different objectives in mind.

*Acacia koa* is native to Hawaii and is known as the Monarch of Hawaiian Forests. What makes it important there is its valuable wood when used in the manufacture of high quality furniture. Demand for the ever diminishing koa is so high in Hawaii that a consumer can expect to pay over \$1000 for custom-made furniture. The **Footloose Forester** personally knows a self-employed carpenter on Oahu who decided long ago to limit his carpentry business to the manufacture of hand-made koa furniture.

In Rwanda, however, the experimental planting of koa in the 1990s at the Butare experiment station was based not on its commercial value for furniture but its prospective value in a suite of exotic tropical nitrogen-fixing trees that might be adaptable at high altitude in highly acid soils and still provide edible leaf fodder and nutritious seed pods. Other uses as firewood, local construction of farm implements, erosion control, and other all-purpose objectives were not evaluated, per se, but are always in the mix of values of promising species that are selected for promoting agroforestry.

The fact that after only a few years in the array of multi-species plantings, *Acacia koa* was among the few clearly superior species in terms of height growth, straightness, stem diameter, fodder production, and resistance to disease...made for a Eureka! discovery. **Footloose Forester** hopes that the quality of its wood for construction purposes will also be realized as the trees mature.

Along with other promising agroforestry species, the early experimental results at Butare, Rwanda were published in 1995. The research reference is: A. I. Niang, E. Styger, A. Gahamanyi, and J. Ugeziwe.

International Center for Research in Agroforestry, ICRAF/ISARProject, RP. 617, Butare, Rwanda. Comparative growth of 15 exotic species and provenances in high-elevation acid soils of Rwanda.

It was gratifying to know that the experimental results are in the archives of agroforestry research. The **Footloose Forester** was privileged to know the chief authors, Amadou Niang and Erika Styger, both of whom were dedicated scientists and who personally pointed out the impressive growth of the Hawaiian koa in their trials at the Gatuka Research Station.

*Acacia koa* and an associated species, *Acacia koaia*, were two Hawaiian provenances that stood out among the superior producers of forage biomass. They also performed better in the acid soils with high aluminum saturation of the Rwandan uplands than most of the other species tested. Although wood quality for construction purposes was not evaluated as an objective of the trials, that eventual payoff may be realized in the future. Multipurpose tree species are sought for a variety of reasons and it remains to be seen whether koa, the Monarch of Hawaiian Forests, will one day will be celebrated with another Eureka! moment.

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## THE BABY AND THE BATHWATER

The continuously improving technologies of digital coding and wireless communications via computer have opened up opportunities for individuals that most of us do not fully appreciate. As the innovators, techies, and software developers continue to forge ahead, we the consumers of their modern products are regularly treated to their blizzard of innovations. It becomes easier and easier to understand and to use; albeit with a pace dictated by our own personal learning curves. Nonetheless, the future of computer technology clearly strengthens the role of the average individual by facilitating communications in ways that have heretofore never been possible.

Writing a short story no longer will require the reader to put his/her imagination to work as hard, nor to the same extent that was required for the past thousand years. Today it is possible to write, to describe, and to explain concepts with the aid of colorful photographs and graphics that are self-explanatory. A picture is worth a thousand words.

The clichéd image of the old expression, “the baby and the bathwater” used to conjure up the dilemma that exists when a nameless, speechless and helpless baby was thrown out after being bathed. The moral point was that, unless the reader was careful, the central issue in the story (the baby) could easily be overlooked and thus discarded if a distracted individual was too impatient and too eager to throw out the smelly, contaminated bath water. Without seeing the baby (one or more main points) in the narrative, far too many people are liable to upend the entire washtub of the story, baby and all.

A narrative without a photo or sketch nonetheless contains a baby that is the implicit objective; but can easily be misunderstood or dismissed if the reader doesn’t immediately see the point—the baby in the



story. Stories with photos, on the other hand, show us the baby. In effect, the sentences and paragraphs are relegated to secondary importance. They constitute the bathwater, prepared in advance with care, and perhaps perfumed with bubbly, fragrant soap; but are less important than the baby in the tub. Nobody will miss seeing the baby (the photo). It clearly makes the bathwater secondary in importance.

Finding and retrieving photos, sketches, maps, etc. from the Internet is almost instantaneous these days. Choosing the right one to put into your story is the most important step you can make to describe your baby in the story you want to tell. But beware! Many, many photos and sketches found on the Internet are copyrighted items and may require permission from the copyright holder before they are used. Unfortunately, copyright law is not as clear cut as it should be; and the legal ownership of Internet images is an open question. As a result, it is easy to make a misstep. Regrettably, it is maddeningly difficult to obtain permission when Internet sites give few clues where to look for permission, whereas capturing the photo itself takes only a few seconds.

On the one hand, for many years following the promulgation of copyright law, virtually anyone was free to photocopy and use a limited number of reprinted documents for their personal use. To my knowledge, personal use of otherwise copyrighted materials is still permissible. It is when there are commercial and profit-related objectives in mind, that the use of copyrighted material is restricted.

Ominously, the current rules and guidelines are so obscure that most people don't realize that they exist. Furthermore, the presumed comprehensiveness of copyright law has very seldom come to the forefront in the daily lives of Internet users who share computer files that contain memes, popular cartoons, shared photos, and other graphic depictions.

These chronicles were never envisioned as one-off entries, that; once published, would become static archives. The world of photography is dynamic and so are the everyday "rules" that apply to the sharing of photographs and other graphics. Accordingly, my serendipity for today, 29 November 2016 has to do with fresh dialogue regarding the photography of others. Re-photography is one new term that describes the overall process. But this update to the original chronicle is all about the implications of using the photography of others, as it relates to the pitfalls of sharing copyrighted material. In the November 28/December 5, 2016 edition of TIME magazine, there is a pertinent story that explores one noted example. The following paragraph explains things.

### The ultimate appropriation

The idea for the project that would change everything sacred about ownership in photography came to Richard Prince when he was working in the tear-sheet department at Time, Inc. While he literally deconstructed the pages of magazines for the archives, Prince's attention was drawn to the ads that appeared alongside articles. One in particular caught his eye: the macho image of the Marlboro Man riding a horse under blue skies. And so, in a process he came to call "rephotography," Prince took pictures of the ads and cropped out the type, leaving only the iconic cowboy and his surroundings. That Prince didn't take the original picture meant little to collectors. In 2005, *Untitled (Cowboy)* sold for \$1.2 million at auction, then the highest publicly recorded price for the sale of a contemporary photograph. Others were less enthusiastic. Prince was sued by a photographer for using copyrighted images, but the courts ruled largely in Prince's favor. That wasn't his only victory. Prince's rephotography helped create a new art form--photography of photography--that foreshadowed the era of digital sharing and upended our understanding of a photo's authenticity and ownership.

As a sometime researcher who learned the ABCs of copyright law and abided by them during the years of writing for publication, the **Footloose Forester** dutifully cited the reference(s) to the writings of others. All that was required was a proper citation. Even when your own research paper was published in journals that had national and international distribution, a simple but proper citation was all that was required to escape scrutiny, all around. Copyrighted material in publications could also be used, if proper permission was obtained from the publisher. That is where the rub comes in.

These days, the inclusion of photos straight from the Internet is seldom questioned about their legitimate origins, but the issue should be put into its proper place. Some book publishers won't accept photos that are not the property of the author. But on the other hand, computer social sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, a self-acknowledged photo-sharing site, seldom question the source of shared graphics. Photos, memes, and other graphics by the thousands that are posted daily without proper attribution or copyright clearances is the norm. Social media sites also facilitate the practice by offering free, largely open enrollment at their web sites, and by encouraging their members to share posts consisting of text, photos, videos, and graphics.

The object lesson of this particular chronicle is that a picture in a story is still worth a thousand words. Not exactly a revolutionary finding, but one which should be considered when contemplating your own

next story. Of the millions of photos, drawings, maps and other renderings found on the Internet, many have been copyrighted, but most probably have not. The challenge is in knowing which is which.

A most poignant example of why it matters can be taken from a recent chronicle that the **Footloose Forester** submitted. Somewhat petulantly, the **Footloose Forester** acknowledges that he was recently denied the use of a particular photograph in a proposed story he wished to publish in a book. The reason given was because he did not take the photograph himself, and/or because the photograph of that mountain was obtained through a Google search of the Internet; and from an unspecified origin. In this case, the photo of the mountain was the baby in the story. Without the baby, the story and the bathwater were pointless. That particular mountain (Pyramid Peak in the California Sierra Nevada Mountains) was part of his past and the **Footloose Forester** feels compelled to fight to have it included in the story.

(A photo of Pyramid Peak in early winter, as he saw it most often, deserves to be shown here)

He would gladly seek a waiver from the restriction of copyright law, if he could identify the putative owner of the photo. Alas, all attempts to date have come up empty. And he doesn't feel justified including a photo of another—copyright-free photo—mountain, just because he can't disprove that it is not copyrighted, nor claim that he has permission to use the photo of his baby.

Whereas the **Footloose Forester** was denied the use of several satellite photos proposed for inclusion in his 2015 book because their source was Google Earth and were presumed to be copyrighted, the game in 2016 is now changed. Google, Inc. altered their copyright policy regarding the use of Google Earth satellite photos. Since their policy change on 17 December 2015, it is now permissible to use Google Earth photos in books, without copyright restriction. This is an important step forward in publishing; and is a major encouragement to people who think that photos with geospatial evidence would enhance any number of future stories.

Another example about the baby being the story is contained in a recent **Footloose Forester** chronicle entitled "The Golok." Of the more than 300 pictures of goloks to be found in a Google search of images, only one of them resembled his baby. Any reader could describe his golok by just looking at the picture of his baby. None of the other 300+ goloks one finds by scrolling down resembled his baby closely enough to warrant a positive identification. Since his subsequently stolen golok is now only a memory, the photo in his story is a facsimile. Alas, the **Footloose Forester** cannot again locate it in the photo archives of

the Internet, even when he went directly to the same page where he originally saw it. And that is another problem in verifying sources potentially involving copyright laws. It would seem that you are guilty of copyright infringement until proven innocent.

(“His stolen golok with scabbard looked almost exactly like this” was removed from this story)

Getting all the expected permissions and publisher approvals may not always be possible, especially when most; yes most, of the sources are virtually impossible to trace. We as a society are on the verge of a quantum leap in the sophistication of storytelling. Using photos of mountains, at least, should be a public domain issue because all the mountains in the world are in the public domain, regardless of whether some faceless authority lays claims to the sole right to use photographs of them.

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*A to Z Word Potpourri*  
*Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams*  
*Chronicles of a Footloose Forester*  
*By Dick Pellek*

## BEAUTIFUL EARTH, ONE SLIDE AT A TIME



A beautiful place, but don't ask where  
(one of 70 slides in a Power-Point presentation file [Rare-et-magnifique---.pps])

One of the problems in making our stories more interesting is that we all generally lack stunning, pleasing, and personal photographs that satisfy the readers, even if not every reader is interested in the story itself. There should be something for everyone in every story.

“A picture is worth a thousand words” is a clichéd expression that lives on because it is one of the truisms that holds personal relevance in all manner of situations which we might elucidate if we but had the evidence. As previously described in other chronicles by the **Footloose Forester**, he believes that the photo in the story is the baby in the bathwater and is far more important than the bathwater itself. Chances are that people will remember the baby (the photo), even if they have a harder time remembering much about the bathwater (the story itself).

The photo above was chosen not only because it presents a beautiful tableau, photographed with remarkable clarity and artful thoughtfulness, but because it is Exhibit #1 that has become a front burner issue in recent years. We Internet users love to share photos and memes on social networking sites; and to post family photos on-line with friends and other family members. The social networking sites are happy to host such instant graphics; and encourage us to do so, within certain bounds of decorum. The one above was shared by way of France, forwarded onward to New Jersey, and eventually deposited in the e-mail inbox of the **Footloose Forester** in Virginia by a friend who has already shared hundreds of other photos with him. It was the first slide in a Power-Point presentation of 70 slides of beautiful places around the world but the only one that had a tag, in French.

One of several issues about photo sharing, however; arises. Many people will immediately want to know where the original picture was taken. That information is not available because this particular slide show of 70 different scenic places does not provide information about those places, although other slide shows sometimes provides general information about a few of them. Another minor issue is the fact that the slide shown above has a tag written in French. No big deal, but it would add clarity to know that Endroits peu communs can be translated as “unusual places.” That may spark the inclination to wonder about where (and when) the photo was taken but may stifle it when it is discovered that the information is not part of the slide show.

A more important issue about why this particular slide was chosen to make a point is all about our personal right to share it with others. Photographer unknown, locale of photo unknown, sender in France unknown, catalogue number of slide unknown, and status of copyright of photograph unknown. So, is the **Footloose Forester** entitled to share it with others, as it has been freely shared with him?

As long as it is known to be in public domain, none of us should be concerned. But when a photo, a graphic, a meme or other computer-enabled embed that has current copyright protection is part of the

practice of sharing, we have to be cautious. Some book publishers do not allow copyrighted images of any sort to be included in the manuscripts of would-be authors if they do not have permission to use them. The biggest problem of all for would-be authors is in knowing for certain that the images, photos, memes, drawings or graphics of others that they may wish to include in their stories are free of copyright protection. The **Footloose Forester** is itching to extract and share slide #35 and put it into another chronicle. HINT: it is a picture of a huge Sequoia tree.

Accordingly, the **Footloose Forester** is confident that the intellectual property rights of the unknown owner associated with the photo above are not being violated by being shared at this and other social media sites, largely because there is no commercial purpose or financial gain associated with this site, or the other social sites, themselves. Such sites have long permitted and encouraged the sharing of computer-generated images. On the other hand, if the photo above were proffered for inclusion in a book, the **Footloose Forester**, as author, would likely be denied its use because its copyright status is in question.



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## POOR COMMUNICATION, POOR COORDINATION

The petulant side of the **Footloose Forester** once again emerged in a dream of days gone by. In the vein of a story teller, he realized that by stringing together enough examples of past episodes that took place during his working career, the reader would catch on that there was something amiss, and not just the petulant musings of a disgruntled employee.

Let's just blame it on poor communication, leading to poor coordination regarding the job(s) at hand. But there is a point to be made, even if the **Footloose Forester** has to reveal his petulant side that was demanding to emerge from his dream. A hit-or-miss communication system within the Agency for International Development was literally at one end of the production stream; and effective program/project action was at the other end. Coordination was in the middle; and whether it was good, bad or indifferent; smooth project management was held hostage to effective communication.

In his recent dream with petulant overtones, the first case of poor communication that emerged was about natural resource management activities in Ethiopia. The **Footloose Forester** was invited to participate in drafting an environmental management strategy in Ethiopia, as the Regional Natural Resources/Policy Advisor stationed in Nairobi, Kenya. Our office was known as REDSO, the Regional Economic Development Services Office; and it served 22 countries in East and Southern Africa. Ethiopia was one of our clients.

Thus, when a cable came in to the REDSO office asking whether the **Footloose Forester** would accept an assignment to work on an environmental management strategy in Ethiopia during such-and-such dates, he promptly responded. In the formalized response to a formal request, he acknowledged the specific dates of the pending action and his acquiescence to the specifics of the proposed tasks. His reply to the

Ethiopia office was also transmitted by cable. FAX transmissions were also in vogue, but intraoffice communiques were generally referred to as cables. A copy of the cable that was sent then went into his briefcase, for future reference. So far, so good...the first two-way communication had been made. But when he showed up in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on the day proposed, ready to participate for the 10-14 days of project activity as suggested, the first thing he got was a rude greeting. "Pellek, what the hell are you doing here?" The coordination phase was already off to a bad start.

The **Footloose Forester** must confess that he was inwardly amused when he reached into his briefcase and came out with copies of the cables requesting his participation; and the one with his carefully worded response. It was one of those moments in life that he remembers standing there in the office of the USAID Project Manager and telling her that he was there on time, on that specific Wednesday on which he was requested. The Project Manager didn't want to look him in the eye and acknowledge the truth.

If the **Footloose Forester** sometimes irritated the clients who asked for his consulting services within USAID, it might be because he came prepared with the paperwork that was expected to be relevant in getting a dialogue underway, starting with the cables pursuant to work assignments. That automatically limited their wiggle room.

All cables were issued through the US Embassy and all cables had the typed, sanctioned signature of the American Secretary of State. That was the authorization for us to be in Ethiopia or any other country when our mission was USAID related. If project coordination sometimes suffered, often it was because both parties were not on the same page when it came to cable communications.

An appropriate segue about poor communication leading to problems with coordination was even more dramatic in an assignment to Namibia. The **Footloose Forester** was looking forward to visiting Namibia for the first time early in the 1990s because it was among the most recently independent counties in the world. He was hoping to see the process of transitioning from one government (South Africa) to a new nation with newly elected leaders with their own ideas about governing.

He was properly invited (by cable) to come and explore the prospects of starting one or two projects with wildlife conservation and natural resources management as their main themes. Project Proposals were the avenues that led to identifying operational projects at some later date, pending approval and funding in Washington. Proposal writing seemed to be in the offing.

The two projects that emerged from the process were a source of enormous satisfaction to the **Footloose Forester** who was delighted to be involved from the very beginning, at the concept stage. The petulant bruising about the Namibia experience, nevertheless; also came out of the same dream that harbored the Ethiopia experience. As regards Namibia, it was all about getting started, not about anything untoward later on. The recollection goes something like this:

The **Footloose Forester** knew through the grapevine at the REDSO office that Namibia would soon need to establish a working portfolio of international development projects. His supervisor mentioned that the USAID Director in Namibia was thinking about both wildlife management and natural resource conservation. The **Footloose Forester** eagerly awaited the cable inviting him to participate at the ground level in Namibia.

When the brief but explicit cable regarding the work assignment came, the **Footloose Forester** replied with acquiescence regarding the starting date and proposed period of work. This time, the communication phase did function in a timely manner. But Namibia soon said that they had a conflict on those dates (the dates they themselves had proposed), and then proposed alternate dates. The **Footloose Forester** adjusted his own work calendar accordingly and penciled in the new dates. His return cable agreed to the new time schedule. Except Namibia then sent another cable and again suggested a different date. **Footloose Forester** agreed, by cable, to the new schedule. Then Namibia wanted another change, and another time period...and then another. Footloose again agreed. To bring this bizarre episode to a conclusion, it is absolutely true that the **Footloose Forester** changed his work schedule five (5) times before he was off to Namibia. Coordination with other clients in other countries was starting to crack.

Truth is sometimes stranger than fiction. When he arrived, the **Footloose Forester** noted some sense of consternation on the part of the USAID Director who said that he was not prepared to entertain a mutual work schedule at that moment. Having copies of all five back-and-forth cables in his briefcase didn't win the **Footloose Forester** any sympathy from the Director. But it was relatively easy to begin and continue his assignment alone because the **Footloose Forester** was used to bureaucrats who thought that their presence alone was vital to each and every phase, and later found out that the consultant they invited in was capable of operating on his own.

If this rendition of what happened in Namibia seems like a petulant approach to the facts and sounds self-serving, there is one more segment that will serve as the kicker. Sometime after the **Footloose Forester** was well underway into his field and writing assignment in Namibia, someone from the US Embassy

there came up to him and said that he had just read the cable (the final cable) of acknowledgement and acceptance that the **Footloose Forester** had sent from Kenya. Except that the month of the five-time rescheduled trip cable to Namibia was not even the same month in which someone in the US Embassy first read the cable. They first read the cable in the month after he arrived.

Keeping records and having them handy, as needed, is fundamental; especially in the world of USAID. There are far too many bureaucrats who lose sight of what they ask their consultants to do. And too many, in my humble opinion, don't want to appear as unprepared; or as unaware as they really are. Directors and Project Managers want to show everyone that they are in charge; and appear as being fully informed and aware, even when they are not. The next example is from the Dominican Republic but was part of the same petulant dream of the **Footloose Forester**.

When he was Senior Forestry Advisor in the Agroforestry Outreach Project in Haiti, the **Footloose Forester** was requested to visit the USAID office in neighboring Dominican Republic and access technical references and other pertinent documents that might be relevant to agroforestry programs in the region. It was a sensible course of action, since both countries engaged in some similar agroforestry activities but did not have very strong communications regarding our very similar developmental issues. His supervisor in Haiti therefore sent a cable to the Dominican Republic requesting that **Footloose Forester** be allowed to spend some time at the USAID library in Santa Domingo pursuant to searching out associated project literature.

Things were quiet in the small USAID office in Santa Domingo where the library was located. When he arrived, only a Dominican secretary was there, but the **Footloose Forester** introduced himself and stated that his mission included an extended visit to the library. She said that the Director was not available but that if I had travel orders and a cable of introduction had already been sent, it seemed OK for me to work in the library.

A few hours later, enter the USAID Director who immediately wanted to know who I was, what I was doing there and who allowed me to use the library. But without waiting for an answer, he quite inauspiciously said that he should send me back to Haiti. Once again, the bemused **Footloose Forester** who has a tendency to remember such displays of misguided authority, replied that he would be happy to pack his things and go back to Haiti. But before he did, the Director should read the cable authorizing the **Footloose Forester** to be there; and then explain to my supervisor why I did not complete the assignment for which I had been sent. Of course he had not read the cable. Poor communication, poor coordination!

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## ANDRE THE BIG GAME HUNTER

*On the road...again!* may be the banner adopted by the **Footloose Forester** that subconsciously reminds him of his years of travel, but as they say, “you ain’t seen nothin’ yet.” This fantastic tale is about a real adventurer who still lives his dreams. Andre is still the big game hunter but has other lesser trophies and displays to remind us and himself that some of his many expeditions and subsequent trophies were obtained in backwaters, bays and open oceans; in addition to the plains of Africa.

How to tell the tale of an avid hunter and fisherman who amassed dozens of notable specimens in field and forest, in estuary and open ocean? How do you flavor the story of a man who had enough imagination and drive to also be the principal author of a book numbering 3361 pages? A man who has written about African plains and their migrating herds; of land ownership disputes; of coral reefs in the Caribbean; and of the constituent conflicts regarding wildlife management policies? The **Footloose Forester** doesn’t know how to do that—and do a worthy job of it.

A Critical Evaluation of Conservation and Development in Sub-Saharan Africa “Last Chance Africa” by Dr. Paul Andre DeGeorges and Brian Kevin Reilly is his tome, but not the only book to which his intense mind has contributed. The Development of Taliban Factions in Afghanistan and Pakistan: A Geographical Account 2010 was recently published and co-authored with Major Agha H. Amin and Col. David J. Osinski. Andre has authored other scientific publications about pollution and degradation of coral reefs. But this little chronicle is an attempt to record some of the hunting and fishing trophies you might see if you visit Andre’s house in Virginia.

The **Footloose Forester** remembers a few of the trophies above the sofa of Andre's modest living room in Nairobi in 1992-93; but those were only the modest beginnings. Many more followed. This tale might read more like a catalogue of the holdings in the African Wing of the Museum of Natural History, now that he has seen some of the others.



Andre and Guide with Greater Kudu

Among them are: 2 kudus; 4 gemsboks; 2 buffalos; an impala; a nyala; blue and black wildebeest; bushbuck, Thomson gazelle; springbok; bongo; Burchell's zebra; mountain zebra; savanna buffalo; wart hog tusks; blesbok; Lord Derby eland, Kafue lechwe; and a West African sitatunga. It was a learning process for the **Footloose Forester** when he saw them up close. Andre also mentioned that some of his prizes were stolen from his storage in the USA. The stolen treasures include: a West Africa roan; a savanna buffalo; singsing waterbuck; kob de buffon; plus some sailfish; dolphin fish and 2 fusil de traits.

As a dedicated hunter, Andre has both small and large bore rifles, including a bolt-action .50 caliber elephant gun that was made for him and has his name engraved on it. There are many stories to be told about hunting, if future storytelling with Andre is in the cards.

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## TIME NOW TO BURN ANOTHER AMERICAN FLAG

There were a few times that his neighbors had seen him burning an American flag in the back yard and probably were wondering what he was up to. Burning anything produces smoke; and smoke almost always gets attention. So **Footloose Forester** tried to burn the small, hand-held ones in the early morning hours when there was no wind; and before the neighbors arose from sleep.

It was possible to keep a flame alive if you held the flag by its wooden staff; and at an angle; and used a cigarette lighter. Most small American flags made of cotton would be entirely consumed by flames but, just in case they were not, **Footloose Forester** placed a piece of cardboard underneath to catch those fragments that were not entirely consumed; then burned the remainder a second time. Ashes were condensed into a small pile and re-lit with newspaper.

Larger flags made of nylon were more difficult to burn. Even by putting them into a small cardboard box and stuffing the box with newspaper to increase the temperature as the flag burned, nylon flags don't burn up readily. **Footloose Forester** has enough experience in burning American flags to know that it takes longer to get the job done; and that re-burning will often be required to turn everything into ash. That is why he set aside those faded, torn flags in a special place in his garage until the conditions were ideal for burning.

Although he was openly criticized for taking down a faded flag full of holes from a windy exposure above the outdoor work station of one of his co-workers; he did so because none of the other co-workers agreed to do it, themselves. And the co-worker whose flag it was didn't think his outdated flag, full of holes, needed replacing. So, **Footloose Forester** did it himself after notifying the others that he intended to,



if they didn't take action. After he took it down, he put the small flag into a clear plastic sleeve of one of his 3-hole binder notebooks, for subsequent burning. The co-workers lost no time in spreading the gossip that Footloose Forester had thrown the American flag into the garbage. Such disrespect toward our American flag!!!

What **Footloose Forester** never told them was the fact that that small American flag still remains in that 3-ring binder notebook, 20 years after their accusations. One does not destroy the evidence, if the issue is important enough to meet a challenge.

Why does the **Footloose Forester** so alienate so many colleagues and co-workers? Does he really intimidate them when he does things that are presumed to be contrary to their beliefs and opinions? Why does he keep evidence and not tell anybody about it? One answer is, because **Footloose Forester** was often on the defensive; often saw the need to execute a CYA defense; and was very often without any supporters, whatsoever.

Getting back to the rationale for burning American flags; **Footloose Forester** had been in the US Army and had a level of respect for the flag of his country that not many of his fellow soldiers demonstrated. In the military, when a soldier hears the bugle beginning to sound out TAPS at sunset, every soldier must stop walking, face where the flag is, stand at attention—and salute. As tears start to form in the eyes of the **Footloose Forester** at this very moment, he himself knows why he burns American flags. Over the past 30 years or so, he has burned nearly a dozen of his own faded or damaged American flags as a sign of respect; the respect he feels in his heart. A flag was respectfully burned on 17 November 2014; and with the dignity it deserved.

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## FOUR DAYS TO UHURU PEAK

In March of 1994 the **Footloose Forester** joined with nine other adventurers to climb Mount Kilimanjaro. It was one of those bucket list adventures that got a high priority not long after **Footloose Forester** landed his assignment at the Regional Economic Development and Services Office of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) in Nairobi, Kenya. A few young people at the US Embassy promoted the trip as a do-it-yourself tour into Tanzania and up Kilimanjaro, and they were willing to take on a few more would-be climbers to fill up the van they rented for the trip.

Eventually, our group numbered ten people and consisted of eight people affiliated with the US Embassy, the **Footloose Forester** from USAID, and a local Kenyan coffee grower who had an embassy contact. All of the Embassy climbers (six men and two women) were under 35 years of age. The British coffee grower who was a Kenyan citizen was the oldest at 57 but very fit and an outdoorsman; and the **Footloose Forester** was a restless 53.

Getting to the base of Kilimanjaro from Nairobi could have been a one-day trip by auto but arranging to climb meant having a complement of essentials: the proper warm clothing, sturdy boots, items of personal hygiene, and arrangements for porters and the required mountain guides. Local guides knew that sacred mountain and shared their knowledge. They normally supplied and cooked the meals and hauled the heavier gear as part of their services. For those many purposes, there are a few small mountain guide agencies in the vicinity. We climbers knew that it wasn't going to be cheap, including the \$300 per person fee to enter Kilimanjaro National Park as registered climbers. But it was a once in a lifetime venture and everyone in the group had accepted the terms and even the prospects of not reaching our destination—Uhuru Peak, at 19,343 feet above sea level and the highest point in Africa.

In fact, the embassy organizer of the tour had tried but failed to make it to the summit of Kilimanjaro in the two previous years, and he said that this was his last attempt. Heavy snow had made climbing dangerous and difficult in the previous attempts. The chances of success are very much dependent upon weather conditions. Late February to early April are the best options, due to a reduced chance of snowfalls that could forestall climbing. We were scheduled to go in mid-March and the timing was fortuitous. When we crossed the border from Kenya into Tanzania it was heartening to see only a spotty snowpack on the summit of Kilimanjaro. The mountain is so prominent that it is visible even across the border in Kenya.

Day one of the five-day venture commenced as the van left Nairobi in the morning and ended at a cheap hotel in Arusha, Tanzania where more than one person discovered that the bathrooms did not provide toilet paper. Hence, the travel pack of a wise traveler always contains your own items of personal hygiene. Those travel packs also contained several bottles of water, upon the strong recommendations of climbers with previous experience.

The morning of the next day was spent finalizing the contract with the mountain guides. In addition to the final check regarding meals for their 10 clients, the guide agency supplied us with ski poles, just in case we had to climb in snow banks. By early afternoon we passed through the Marangu entrance gate of Kilimanjaro National Park where we paid our fees and each trekker registered by name and age, just in case there was an emergency at any time, going or coming along the 40 miles of trail. Once on the well maintained lower trail of the popular Marangu climbing route, the next objective was to reach the first base camp at about 9,000 feet elevation where we would stay overnight to rest and get acclimated to the higher altitude.

Day two of the 40-mile trek was at least 12 miles uphill and a transition through rain forest lower slopes, through a genuine fog forest and gradually to a zone of low shrubs and alpine vegetation that was above timberline. The well-used trail was narrow but clearly marked through the dense shrubbery. The second base camp was a makeshift tent community called Horombo, but it also contained a dozen or so small sheltered boxes that were just big enough for a single person and their personal backpack. The rest of the gear remained outside in the fog and wind. An overnight stay at the 12,340-foot Horombo base camp was just long enough for a few hours of sleep and a couple of photos before we turned our feet in the direction of the waiting mountain.



10 trekkers on their way up from Horombo

As we continued upward, most of the dense shrubbery gave way to a decidedly dry and featureless landscape on a long plateau that is probably in the lee of most snowfalls. Although we continued to gain elevation, walking was much easier because the long stretch resembled an extended sloping shoulder. Our destination on day-3 was a stone field house at an elevation of 15,520 feet where we would eat a hot meal cooked over charcoal in a crowded smoky hut. We arrived in late afternoon. Following the meal in Kibo Hut at about 10 PM, we were advised to get some sleep and be prepared for a final assault on the summit very early in the morning of the following day. Early for our group meant about 1:30 AM, and we would be making the climb up the steepest sector in the moonlight to ensure that we reach the summit at sunrise.

One should not think that reaching the summit of Kilimanjaro requires expert climbing skills, because no ropes, ice axes, or pitons are required. Think of the venture as strenuous hiking uphill. There are hardships along the way, but most athletic people can handle it. Nevertheless, the trek from Kibo Hut at 15,520 feet to the rim of the crater formed by the now dormant volcano at 18,638 feet may take up to five hours, even with no snow cover. Stopping to catch your breath might occur every 10 steps, thus the progress of various climbing parties is hardly predictable. That last steep climb of a mile or more was a

bit too much for the youngest member of our group who complained of altitude sickness and returned with one of the guides to the Kibo Hut basecamp.

The mountain guides also know that the much steeper slopes from the Kibo Hut to the top are the most physically taxing. It is customary, therefore, to rest at a sheltered spot just below the rim, known as Gilman's Point and assess who among the group wants to endure the much colder atmosphere of the last 2½ miles to the summit at Uhuru Peak. At that altitude, the wind blows harder and the temperatures are below freezing, so asking climbers individually about their commitment to continue is the prudent thing to do. At that point, one more climber chose to return to base camp.

Our luck held out with respect to the amount of snow we encountered and the pending arrival of sunrise. There was very little snow to be seen and the trail was practically snow free. Regardless of whether or not one believes in global warming, in recent years there has been significantly less snow adorning the summit of Kilimanjaro on a year-round basis. The Google Earth photo below resembles almost exactly the conditions we faced in March of 1994.



Uhuru Peak on the left was the end of the trail

Many of the details that went into this chronicle have been researched and verified through popular Internet sites. Whereas the personal thoughts of other trekkers who made the trip in 1994 also likely ignored many of the specifics in favor of capturing the magnificence of the overall experience, the grand

memory is like a mental painting framed in gold. As a personal account of that trip to an acknowledged sacred place, it was an opportunity for **Footloose Forester** to repeat a favorite expression he often used when he was in the midst of the splendor of God, “*Domine delexi decorem tuae, et locum habitationis gloria tuae*” which is Latin for “Oh, Lord I love the beauty of your house and the place where your glory dwells.

The baby in the bathwater of this tale is the mountain itself. A picture is worth a thousand words and the picture above is a treasure that the **Footloose Forester** hopes to keep forever. Details about what colored socks we wore surely evaporated with time, but the geospatial realities of Kilimanjaro and its environs will remain the same in the future as precisely as they were in the past. ®

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*By Dick Pellek*

## DRS. AND DOCTORANDUS

Titles, degrees, and honorifics are important in some circles to distinguish the achiever by the achievement, the apparent status of the individual by the designator before the name, or the degree credentials after the name. No doubt that it is a cultural affectation that is used by some to distinguish themselves from the unwashed masses but, mercifully, the use of honorifics is not pervasive everywhere.

Lofty titles are like national flags and coats of arms that proclaim pedigree and status to all who come to read credentials engraved in bronze, chiseled into granite or engraved on personal name plates.

If you are anything like the **Footloose Forester**, you must decide in advance and in your own mind which venues are more appropriate, more culturally acceptable and less pretentious in the listings of military rank, academic achievement or medical specialties. There are appropriate places and appropriate circumstances for displaying rank, credentials, and honorific titles; but there are also places where they probably should not be on display. The trick is in knowing when and where to marry the person with the title; and knowing when it is OK to dispense with formalities.

Putting formal titles aside is not the same as ignoring them; it is more like putting the titles on a pedestal until the proper time and place to use them. That, of course, requires more tact and social grace than most people have in them. Graciousness is not something taught in schools. But it can be learned.

It is no secret that the **Footloose Forester** is iconoclastic to the point of abhorring those who are pretentious. An earned degree deserves some respect for the person who earned it, even if the degree itself does not always earn the equivalent respect as co-equal to any other degree. The higher the degree, the greater the respect to the degree holder, all other things being equal; at least within the principle of



giving credit when credit is due. The situation, however; should not be a cause for discomfort. But the world doesn't always work that way. In reality, capable people with good brains may earn high degrees but live as repulsive human beings. You can't judge a book by its cover or the wholesomeness of a profession or the professional by their titles. That goes for kings, medical doctors, or academics.

Nowhere is the use of honorifics more pronounced than in academia. And nowhere is the propensity toward using academic credentials more overblown than in German academia. Professor Dr. Engineer Hans Solo\* will get greater halting respect than would the title Professor Dr. Hans Solo or Professor Hans Solo. They may be the same person with the same credentials, but the unknowing who gaze upon the credentials may not be aware as they wonder about the person.

Poking fun in secret at an obvious buffoon whose name plate says Dr. Nigel Snooty-Brit may be satisfying in retrospect, but until one gets to know the person, we are all a bit disarmed at first encounter. After all, when a person earns a degree or has a title of heraldry, there is a story that goes with the conferment. Some of the stories are legitimate, some are embellished, and some are contrived. There are more than a few people in the world, both male and female, who are wanna-be academics, wanna-be military heroes and wannna-be scholars. Dr. Nigel Snooty-Brit may be a made-up name, but if you listen closely, you may hear him or someone like him introduce himself on the phone. Speaking only for himself, the **Footloose Forester** has taken plenty of phone calls with a Dr. Snooty-Brit—or equivalent on the line. Apparently, others have, too.

Some years ago, in the midst of making travel arrangements to Denver to work in collaboration with a senior ecologist known in his office as Dr. Cotton, the **Footloose Forester** was instructed to call his secretary for instructions. When I identified myself as Dick Pellek, the secretary, whom I had never met, immediately said "thank you for that." The message was clear, she didn't have to converse with someone who insisted on being addressed as Dr. Cotton, Dr. Nigel Snooty-Brit, or whatever. On the other hand, my erstwhile friend from the University of Hawaii, Dr. Mohammad Aziz, did not want to be called Dr. Aziz while he was still in graduate school in Italy, where everyone who finished a B.S. degree was referred to as Doctore. He was uncomfortable with that, so he left Italy to pursue his Ph.D. at the University of North Dakota. He also told the **Footloose Forester** that he had wanted to earn his degree and his title. And he did.

There is a grey area surrounding what is permitted and what is acceptable in regard to academic titles. Calling a person Professor is not risky or overly pretentious if that person is a practicing academic, regardless of their earned degree(s). But calling them Dr. is not acceptable if they do not possess a doctorate, whether it is an earned degree or an honorary one. And getting close to an academic title should not qualify, even if some scholars in a few SE Asia countries announce themselves as Doctorandus so-and-so and emphasize their status by attaching the credential Drs. behind their name. Drs. and Doctorandus are both code words signaling everything was completed except the thesis or dissertation.

\* The people and events in this chronicle are real, but the names have been changed to guard their dignity.

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## CRACKING THE LILLY FUCHSIA CASE

Youthful CSI investigator Jaelyn (Mushroom) Hunt(er) lived the CSI credo of following the evidence. Those essentials are: observe the evidence; gather it up; display it during an initial examination; secure it in a suitable container to protect latent clues; and re-examine the evidence, as needed, for a thorough review of existential linkages that will lead to the perpetrator(s), the motive and the mechanics of execution. Thus, it was that 11-year old Jaelyn (Mushroom) Hunt(er) was able to crack the Lilly Fuchsia Case.

When a mysterious and unexpected parcel was retrieved from the mailbox of her grandparents, they were puzzled about the contents, since the sender whose name was clearly written in cursive in the return address position of the parcel was a person unknown to them. More to the point, the parcel was addressed to Lilly Fuchsia—who did not live at the delivery address. To be sure, the address was correct and clearly written, including the spelling of the longish name of their town and its obscure Zip Code. It was also clear that the sender had used the same thin-line black pen to neatly and unwaveringly fill in both the information blocks in the return address; and the complete address of Lilly Fuchsia in Greenbackville, Virginia.

Since the address checked out, the grandparents took the liberty of opening the parcel to discover that it contained the Pokémon figurine known as Giratina. Surely this was intended for Jaelyn, but it was sent from Philadelphia in Eastern Pennsylvania; and Jaelyn was only visiting for a relatively short time in Virginia. Who was the sender? Why did they send it to the obvious alias named Lilly Fuchsia?

Some of the photographic evidence was saved. Steps have been taken to protect the privacy and identity of those not directly involved. It was; however, a real mystery and it took the observational skills of Jaelyn Mushroom Hunt(er) to get to the bottom of it.

The plastic Pokémon Giratina had formed a conspicuous bulge in the soft packing envelope and was readily extracted unto the examination table. There was nothing unusual about it; it seemed to be a genuine Giratina.

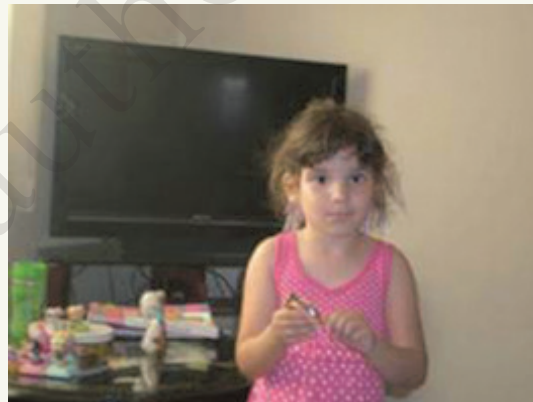
The mystery about the sender and why a Giratina was sent to an alias with the surname Fuchsia festered until the following morning when CSI special agent Hunt(er) took another look inside the thick mailing envelope. She discovered a torn piece of art paper with a faint pencil sketch which clearly was a work of her own doing. Even her grandparents recognized the signature lines of her stylized cats. The envelope also contained a thin strip of coded hieroglyphics that some of her school mates called unknown writing. Evidence was mounting that the sender and Jaelyn shared a common interest in coded hieroglyphics and the artwork of Jaelyn herself. But the sender didn't attempt to write any words on the enclosures.

When CSI Hunt(er) put the torn sheet of artwork together with the strip of code, she knew that it could only be sent from her classmate in Western Pennsylvania, the one who always wanted to be called Lilly. Thus, it appeared, Lilly Fuchsia had sent a small gift to Jaelyn by addressing the package to herself. By now, 11-year-old CSI Jaelyn Mushroom Hunt(er) had deduced that it came from her school friend Taylor. Mystery solved! Case closed!

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## MAKE THAT A DOUBLE!

Jaelyn was not yet 11 years old, but she was already a skilled fisherman.... make that fishergirl. More than once this summer she has come back from fishing trips as the one who either caught the most fish or caught the biggest ones. Sometimes the competition is only Grandma, but at other times when she goes out in the boat with our friend Andre, my brother Paul and Grandma; or with Andre's brother Nick, she usually catches the most croakers to bring home. Of course, there are small ones that get thrown back, or sharks that nobody cares to eat; or flounders that are too small to keep, or undersized black drum, or something unexpected. But Jaelyn has already made her mark as the one who most often manages to catch two fish on the same line. Two hooks, two fish on the same line. She calls them doubles.



Jaelyn is a little older now, but just as cute

Recently she came back from a productive day in Chincoteague Bay and announced that she had managed five doubles—a total of ten croakers on her five casts into the waters. Grandma was proud, Andre was jealous and his brother Nick was amazed. Jaelyn is experienced beyond her years. By now we can't call it beginner's luck. The next step is when she wields a scaling knife and completely owns her prized catches. And that means cleaning them but it will bump up her commitment to fishing beyond just reeling them in.

Fortunately, Grandma is already committed to fishing. This season she has spent many hours cleaning fish, drying them in a food processor and/or vacuum packing them for the freezer. Nobody is counting but there are already about 200 tasty croakers that have been packed away. On occasion, we decide to eat a few fresh ones for dinner; or to steam up a few dozen clams; or to serve up the occasional crab that comes home in the bucket. We shouldn't forget the oysters that we ourselves pry from the rocks or anchor points where they are found.

Just this morning Jaelyn revealed how she manages to remain as champ at catching doubles. Instead of setting the hook and immediately reeling in the line and hauling in a single fish into the boat, she waits to be sure that there really is a fish on the line. Undoubtedly there are other fish that have spotted her second piece of bait, so quite often at least one other fish gets hooked before she reels them both in. By the way, the last time out she had four doubles, so her success is no fluke.

With Jaelyn sitting next to me and serving as a personal reviewer of this story, you can be assured that it is accurate. And that is how I wish future legacy stories get written.

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## WHAT'S THE ADDRESS OF THE DEVIL'S TOWER?

Most young adults these days know enough about GPS technology to find a street address in a strange city by just looking it up on a smart phone, or an iPad, or a dedicated GPS device. And when their car also has an embedded GPS system or one that plugs into the cigarette lighter, getting from home to that specific address can be accomplished without the apprehension of years gone by.

Commercial Global Positioning Systems (GPS) are now proprietary entities derived from the outgrowth of a broader technological field originally described as GIS, or Global Information Systems. Since the applications of both GPS and GIS technologies are satellite based and worldwide in scope, GIS and GPS tech are routinely used in virtually every country. What is it about them that make their components both revolutionary and unique? Let's ease into the sophistication one step at a time.

Suppose we want to visit the Empire State Building in New York City. How do we get there by road from across the Hudson River in New Jersey? And once we arrive in the heart of The Big Apple, how best to find it without getting lost or wasting time by taking wrong turns? The most obvious way would be to look up the address, which happens to be 350 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Or we could key in the words Empire State Bldg. and conduct a map search on our hand-held GPS, or the one in our modern car.

Once we know the street name, most GPS devices let you type in the street number first, followed by the name of the street and the city and state where it is located. Although we may not be aware of what is going on within the device, having the destination city and state are also important inputs, lest the GPS unit send us across the country in the wrong direction in search of a town with a common name, such as Springfield. There is a Springfield in every state so we need to zero in.



Most of the data in GPS devices are stored in distant servers and relayed to satellites orbiting in space. After the combination internal-external GPS system data bases locate the address we want, by virtue of an electronic dialogue among satellites in space and receiving stations on earth, our device may plot a map route to the destination and insert a stick pin at the point on the map that represents our intended destination.

When we arrive at our destination at the Empire State Building at 350 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue in New York City we should note that the street address corresponds to its geographic coordinates of latitude 40° 44' 54.56"N and longitude 73° 59'07.25"W. Written another way, in decimal notation, the coordinates are 40.748445° lat. and -73.985429° lon.

We may never have a need to remember the geographic coordinates of the Empire State Building, but there are plenty of places and important land features that do not have street addresses or do not occur in towns or cities that we might want to remember, down to a few feet of radius.

For outdoorsmen, explorers, scientists, sailors, and researchers; recording the geographical coordinates helps us to archive the exact location of a camp site, a new route, an archeological discovery, or the place where there may be buried treasure—in the middle of a forest or on the high seas. In the case of the discovery of the sunken HMS Titanic, those coordinates had been kept secret in order to discourage unwanted looters.

Finding a particular spot on the ground in the middle of a forest or on the high seas requires a quantum leap in understanding of the ABCs of GPS technology. The approaches are entirely different from looking up an address but are complementary in regards to data components. On the one hand, telling someone from New York City to meet you at the Empire State Building is one thing, but telling them to meet you in Central Park is quite another. The broad 10,000-acre parcel of land area that comprises Central Park is too expansive as the sole description of a meeting place. If you pinpoint the location for a Central Park rendezvous as 40° 46' 55.41"N and 73° 57' 55.53"W, you should see them when you arrive.

When the destination point is in the middle of a forest, however; the geographic coordinates do matter because there are no street addresses. Neither are there any street addresses in the open rangeland of NE Wyoming where the Devil's Tower is located. But the GPS coordinates will tell us that the magnificent rock formation known as the Devil's Tower has a global address of 44°35'25.88"N and 104°42'57.31"W.

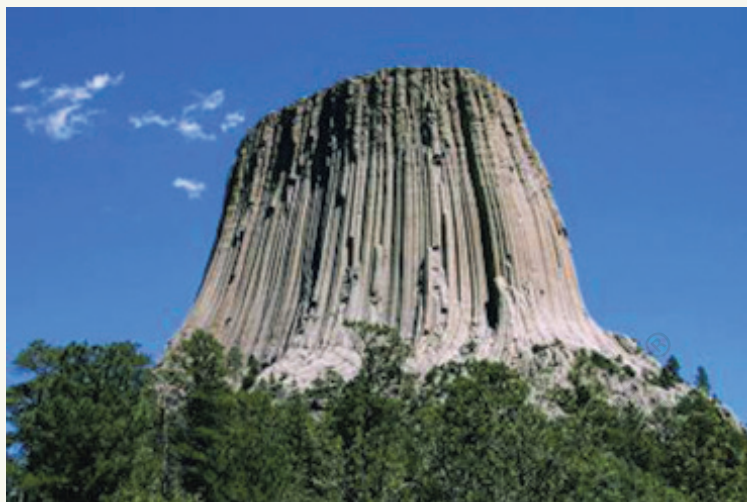


Photo Credit: Thu Pellek

Getting back to the everyday uses of GPS, it is easy to learn the geographic coordinates of both the starting point and the destination shown on Google Earth or similar maps, because they are embedded as part of the active screen on the computer monitor. Walking or driving directions between the points are derived by providing an algorithm solution of transit choices between the two points.

In the case of knowing the coordinates of a newly discovered site, it requires the GPS user to be on site; and only then to note what the satellite data tells the user about his/her exact position on earth. Since the heretofore unknown site may not be part of any known data archive, plotting a route can only be initiated at the site itself, and traced back to the initial starting point.

Many practical applications have evolved from improved GPS technologies. A few true and memorable examples come to mind. If the geographic coordinates of an obscure, remote 30-year-old experimental fruit nursery in Haiti were generally known, it would be possible for present and future researchers to go directly to the site without the need for paper maps that don't contain the information; or the need to have as a guide one of the very few local people who personally remember where the nursery is. As things now stand, the original records of the plantings have been destroyed in a fire. For all intents and purposes, all useful scientific knowledge has also been obliterated.

Another example of the value of recorded geographical coordinates as part of research field notes pertains to field investigations in soil science. Only a handful of people in the world care about knowing exactly where rare soil monoliths of Cape Verde inceptisols came from; and even fewer people would be able to take them to the place where they were excavated, if they ever wanted to see for themselves. The dozen or so magnificent specimens of Cape Verde inceptisols that were skillfully extracted and preserved in 1985 represent the only ones in the world. And the man who did the extractions worked alone, and presumably is the only person in the world who can lead an interested researcher to the several spots in the landscape where he obtained his specimens. The specimens themselves, fortunately, have been preserved as museum pieces in a soil science laboratory in Lisbon, Portugal.

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## MAKING MARMALADE

At three o'clock the Bengal Tiger noticed that the wild grapes in the vacant lot next door were fully ripe and ready for harvest. By four o'clock, or maybe 4:15, those grapes were picked, washed, cooked, strained and ready to become wild grape jelly. A small amount of sugar was added to taste. Except that the Bengal Tiger was not going to be satisfied with a plain grape jelly, even if she made it herself. Enter the secret ingredients, ala Thu.

First came the orange peels, properly scraped and shredded for the grainy texture of her grape marmalade. Indeed, it was the first time she had made either grape jelly or marmalade; but it was also the first opportunity she had to use the wild grapes next to the house in one of her experimental recipes.



The Grape Jelly Marmalade Maker a.k.a. The Bengal Tiger

In just a few minutes the shredded orange peel and its juices were blended into the thickened jelly matrix. Finally, she added a secret ingredient that she kept in the spice cupboard—seaweed. It was a pale-yellow variety of seaweed that her Mom had herself harvested in the waters off Oahu and sent in a package for her daughter, years ago. Now was the time to put a few gelatinized clumps of the seaweed into the mix to thicken the ingredients into a jelly. The finished product was a grape jelly that was indistinguishable from other grape jellies except for the distinct flavor of orange. Grape Jelly Marmalade!

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## ARGUING WITH SHEILA

It took a long, 5,500-mile trip with GPS guidance to finally convince us that it is not a good idea to trust the GPS for all the answers. Although our superior GPS unit quickly maps out a route to our destination and tosses in logos for banks, gas stations and places to eat along the route, not all of the information is accurate because the data is only as good as the database on which it was designed.

Brand new sectors of roads and newly erected buildings may not appear on the GPS monitor because they may not yet be in the database. Likewise, restaurants and gas stations that have gone out of business may still appear on the monitor but not really exist as functioning enterprises.

Sheila, the name we gave to our Garmin GPS, gets mostly everything right but insists on having her way even when we know better. Sheila has a pleasant speaking voice and doesn't argue back when we argue with her about taking certain routes, but we sometimes have to literally turn her off when she insists that we take a dirt road to reach our destination between two major cities. It isn't Sheila arguing about the choice of routes, she is only doing what she was programmed to do, get us to our destination by taking shortcuts that chop off miles. Most times we disagree about leaving a perfectly smooth state or federal highway in favor of an unpaved road that pops up on the map but is the one that Sheila announces by name and advises us when to turn. Sheila is clever, articulate, and mostly reassuring but we have learned when to ignore her advice. But not before arguing with her as she calmly announces one unpaved road after another between Thermopolis and Rock Springs, Wyoming. Poor Sheila, it's not that we lack confidence in you knowing that a back road here and there might just get us through to Rock Springs as advertised, it is more about worrying about getting stranded on a desolate stretch of country road or getting bogged down in a washed-out arroyo.

Sheila knows more details about local geography, in graphic terms, than we ever will and we have learned to trust her word most of the time; but we have finally learned not to take her advice each and every time she speaks up.

The technology of GPS has been improved, updated, and packaged into smaller and smaller devices. In the early days of GPS use, the receivers had to be mounted in the back of a pick-up truck; and later on, fitted into back packs for mobility. Nowadays, top of the line cell phones have GPS as one of the app selections. But although our larger GPS has a wider screen, the GPS in our smartphone is so good that we have all but abandoned mounting our Garmin on the windshield when we take a long trip. The much smaller GPS system in our smartphone is great, but it is not without faults.

Sheila is also the name we gave to the GPS in our smartphone. The older Sheila in our Garmin unit was her mother, but as a tribute to her Mom's cleverness, we also named her daughter Sheila. We listen to her for advice and instructions, but we also ignore her when we sometimes know better.

Sheila, mom or daughter, will plot out alternative routes on the long trips for which GPS is most useful. She will dutifully program, 1) the most direct route; 2) the most scenic route, or 3) the route without tolls. Some systems may also have other program options. So, before you set out and put your complete trust in the infallibility of the highlighted route chosen, be aware that young Sheila does not know everything. She makes the same kinds of poor choices as her mother.



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## LAVA FLOWS AT GRANTS, NEW MEXICO

As you speed along one of the broad highways of the US interstate system, it is easy to miss some of the most interesting things along the way. Of course, the driver is at a disadvantage in spotting some things not within her normal range of vision, but that won't prevent her from engaging in a mind game about what she is seeing and just what it might mean. Just as we can remember a vivid scene in a favorite movie, capturing the memories of spectacular sights in the Americana of the open road has endless possibilities. When organized and analyzed, the thoughts become part of our past, awaiting the sessions with family and friends when we tell our little stories. And we all have stories to tell.

*On the road.... again!* as the letterhead tagline at the top of the masthead: Chronicles of the **Footloose Forester** persists because it represents a needed reminder that each and every chronicle is about an actual adventure during a sojourn from the past, or a virtual adventure into the land of mental concepts. This chronicle is about one of the longer trips on pavement, bitumen and macadam; and joyed to be remembered in his personal chronicles ... *On the road.....again!*

Our destination was The Four Corners area of the American West. At the conjunction of survey lines where Utah, Arizona, Colorado and New Mexico meet, it is possible to put your hand into all four states at the same time. At least that is what we have believed since the days in 1882 when the survey was completed and the first maps were drawn up. Getting started and making our way, however, was not something that could be described as a typical road trip. We would start out from our home in Virginia in our spacious and comfortable Infiniti SUV and end up 5385 miles later in a rental car from Indianapolis, Indiana.

As we drove west toward Indianapolis, the red warning Check Engine light came on. Since we were on vacation and not in any hurry, we decided to have the problem checked out sooner, rather than later. At the Infiniti dealership in Indianapolis, the chief mechanic informed us that we had a serious problem. It wasn't about the engine, that had only some 5300 miles on it since it was replaced in Cumberland, Maryland, following a burnt-out oil bearing. And although the frame itself had over 129,000 miles of wear, the body was in great shape and we did not suspect anything amiss. Of course, there had been that letter from Infiniti of North America, Inc. that notified us that our Model Year 1999 SUV was subject to a recall campaign; and that we would be notified with a subsequent letter where and when to bring it in. There was no follow-up letter.

To our good fortune, the manager of the Infiniti dealership accepted our explanation about not getting further instructions about the recall campaign. He then and there offered to make arrangements to buy our car on the spot; and to bear the cost of a rental vehicle for as long as it took to finalize the purchase transaction--back home in Virginia. He was as good as his word. A long three weeks and some 5385 miles later (data thanks to a small notebook and a short pencil), we pulled into our driveway in Greenbackville, Virginia in a rented Dodge Charger. We were happy to be home, safe and sound with memories of our traverse through 18 states. Thanks to the manager at the Infiniti dealership in Indiana, we had returned in a car about which we had no worries about its overall reliability.

A week-long stopover to visit Thu's cousin in Minneapolis was always part of the wide detour, thus penciling in an intermediate stop to see the granite monuments of US presidents at Mount Rushmore in South Dakota was a natural way-point. Truth be known, the **Footloose Forester** always hopes for those serendipities in life to keep his imagination alive. And the serendipity of driving by lava fields near Grants, New Mexico was one of the most satisfying aspects of our long journey... *On the road...again!*

The lava flows visible from US Interstate 40 near Grants, New Mexico seem to be remarkably fresh. When you see the lava fields up close they are jet black, suggesting that they are as fresh as similar flows on the flanks of the active Kilauea Crater volcano in Hawaii. At Kilauea on the island of Hawaii, the oldest of the exposed blankets of surface lava are no more than 200 years old; however, the lava field shown above is at least 3,0000 years old.

More remarkable than the jet-black lava crusted land that can be seen from Interstate 40, is the complex topography at nearby El Maipais National Monument. There, huge lava tubes that resemble long caves attest to the fact that in the geological past, the viscous lava flowed like an underground river. Yet, even adjacent to the heavily traveled interstate freeway, the terrain is so broken that it quite probable that no human being has ever once walked a straight line, for as little as 100 yards. In the best of circumstances, it is virtually impossible to navigate your way directly across the lava fields. Needless to say, there is no building or structure of any kind; except for the few roads that have been blasted through in order to connect population centers. If the lava fields were jungle, they would aptly be described as “impenetrable.”

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## REALLY TICKED OFF

Some people fear ticks because they might carry Lyme Disease. Others fear them because they are hard to spot on your outerwear and may crawl into your inner garments. If and when they attach themselves to your flesh and begin to seek a blood meal, they are hard to pull off without breaking off a leg or two. All valid fears, and all based on real happenings. Ticks are nasty little creatures. And although they don't move very fast, there are so many of them eager to attach themselves to dogs, deer, and homeowners mowing their lawns; that they get their fair share of attention during breakfast conversation. There are about 850 different species of ticks, worldwide.

The **Footloose Forester** has contemplated the dangers of ticks and their possible consequences more than most people. He spent more than 50 years working in the woods where various species of ticks were present and seemed to thrive without any practical repellant strategy to reduce the risks. Long before the various species of ticks carrying Lyme Disease became a regional concern in the Eastern Seaboard states, he had to contend with the Rocky Mountain spotted tick that carries Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. That threat was prevalent throughout many states in the Rocky Mountain region, and he spent a fair amount of time in Idaho, Montana, Colorado, and elsewhere in the West. He was never victimized by Rocky Mountain spotted ticks, but he had too many episodes with other species of ticks, in other places.

The **Footloose Forester** came back from a trek through the National Bison Range outside Norman, Oklahoma with a few dozen ticks on and under his clothing. Knowing why and how to avoid brushing through vegetation of any sort, and consciously avoiding those circumstances, did not prevent him from coming back to his Advanced Artillery Training barracks at Fort Sill, loaded with ticks. It was a bit anguishing to attend to them in the presence of a dozen or more other soldiers who shared their large

barracks room. And since he didn't know any of the other soldiers well enough to ask them to inspect his bare back and private parts, he had to withdraw to the relative privacy of a bathroom stall, small mirror in hand, to attempt to discover and then remove all the ticks that remained since his earlier surreptitious inspections of his body. Luckily, he seemed to have found them all, and he did not have any consequences.

The tiny ticks that crawled up, dropped down, and hitched a ride onto the clothing and the body of the **Footloose Forester** in Venezuela presented a special problem. Although he had the privacy of a hotel room in which to conduct his inspections, his count of over 200 ticks on his body was so alarming that he decided that he had to take drastic action to ferret out those that may have been on his back and in posterior crevices. What to do?

Somewhat sheepishly, he knocked on the door of the hotel patron who occupied the next room. He was a young British researcher who was also conducting research in the same watershed where the **Footloose Forester** had acquired his many ticks.

Perhaps it was his completely simpatico understanding of the problem that led the Brit to agree to pick the ticks off the back of the **Footloose Forester**. We didn't keep count of the number that he picked off, because the total number was already over 200.

As it turned out, the Brit asked the **Footloose Forester** for a favor in return. He had lost an expensive sports shoe the day before, at the site where dugout canoes normally beached to drop off and take on their research passengers upstream in Rio Caparo. The Brit stated that he did not intend to go to the field the following day, but the **Footloose Forester** did, and he intended to debark at that very same place along the bank of the Rio Caparo. The next day, the **Footloose Forester** found that sports shoe at the exact location that was described. One good turn deserves another.

There are various species of ticks and they come in various sizes. As a consequence, the ticks in the woods of New Jersey were not a problem because they were so big and so obvious that you could even feel them on your clothing, so taking them off your bare skin was not difficult. In later years, the **Footloose Forester** became acutely conscious of their presence, wherever that might be.

Unfortunately for his four dogs in Viet Nam, the most common place that dog ticks were found was between the paws of their feet. When they were first discovered in the webbing of their paws, all four

dogs resisted having to go through the daily inspections. But getting relief from tick bites was worth the trouble, and eventually, all of the dogs looked forward to the routine of looking for ticks between their outspread paws.

Since moving to Virginia, our family has been apprised of the problem with ticks during all of the warmer months of the year. The concern is justified...last year a man assisting a tree topper in the lot across the street counted 27 ticks on his clothing, after spending just 20 minutes in the woods adjacent to an open lawn where the tree was being topped. And the **Footloose Forester** pulled 31 small ticks off after just an hour or so in the wooded area across from where we live.

We do full body inspections after we spend a day outside, even after mowing the lawn or working in the garden. What ticks us off, however; is the fact that the usually tiny deer ticks we find in Virginia can go unnoticed for a couple of days after we have made what we thought was a thorough body inspection. That, and the fact that the tiny Virginia ticks can leave an angry red bump at the very spot that they were picked off; a reminder that despite their small size, they contain enough poison to make you itch for a full fortnight. Now, wouldn't that tick you off?

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*By Dick Pellek*

## KNEE HIGH BY THE 4TH OF JULY

Growing up in the snowbelt of Northern New Jersey, the **Footloose Forester** was aware of the fact that our little town was about 10 degrees colder than in metropolitan New York City, where most of the daily weather forecasts originated. New York was only 43 miles away, according to the road signs at Netcong Circle on Route 46; but far enough away that we kids learned to discount what the weather reports said about how hot it was going to get, but especially about how cold it was going to be in the winter. So, it was not surprising that when late spring and early summer came around, we would also hear expressions like “April showers make May flowers”; and “Knee high by the 4<sup>th</sup> of July.” The latter cliché was about the corn crop growing in the fields.

Wise farmers in our area didn’t plant corn until about the 10<sup>th</sup> of May because of the danger of late frosts. It was good advice because there were plenty of late frosts in the Morris and Sussex County region of Northern New Jersey. In South Jersey they could plant a couple of weeks earlier because their springtime temperatures were a bit warmer. We kids didn’t think too much about that during those growing up years, yet we kind of understood that crops got started earlier in the South. But the cliché about growing corn was right on the mark. If a farmer planted corn after the 10<sup>th</sup> of May, he could expect to see his crop knee-high by the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. That is, if the rainfall patterns and normal rise of daily temperatures continued to be routine. And the wise and attentive farmers kept their eyes on the corn crop as the days marched by. Even the youthful **Footloose Forester** looked forward to inspecting farmers’ fields here and there, to see if the growing season was reliable enough to produce corn stalks that were tall enough to pass inspection. That also included going into the fields to stand next to corn stalks and measure how high they came up your leg. As a young teenager, he worked at Mooney’s Dairy Farm, and had plenty of opportunities to go into those corn fields.





Corn crop photographed on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013

Fast forward to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and the continuous introduction of superior plant varieties that not only grew faster and produced heavier grains, but also were more tolerant of inclement weather conditions. Of course, in Northern Virginia that also means that farmers don't wait until the 10<sup>th</sup> of May to plant corn. Thus, for this area at least, we can forget about the expression, "Knee high by the 4<sup>th</sup> of July."

*A to Z Word Potpourri*  
*Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams*  
*Chronicles of a Footloose Forester*  
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## JOE FODOR BAILS OUT, THEN SURVIVES STALAG-17

### A Story of War

Joe Fodor is going on 90 now, but you would never know it when you see him move, listen to him talk and look into those bright blue eyes. Joe has been to places many of us may have heard of but would not want to be there, ourselves, under those circumstances. Joe Fodor used to live in Stalag-17. His story is so incredible that it seems almost impossible for anyone to grasp how many of the events in his life could happen to just one person. The **Footloose Forester** is humbled with the opportunity at hand to tell his tale, and he will try and do justice to Joe Fodor's true story.

Joe Fodor is a native of Imperial, Pennsylvania where he grew up and now still lives with Alice, his wife of 60 years. On the day after Memorial Day, 2011 Joe agreed to sit down with the **Footloose Forester** and talk of the days when Joe was an airman with the US Army Air Force. He had tried to enlist as a volunteer in the spring of 1942, but the recruiters took one look at the place on his right hand where he was missing his middle finger, due to an industrial accident, and they immediately dismissed him. A few months later, however, his draft notice arrived in the mail and he was ordered to report for a physical exam at Bridgeville, Pennsylvania. The attitude this time was much different, as the interviewer motioned with his trigger finger that his missing middle finger would not be a problem.

After induction and the series of tests to determine where he would fit in, Joe and only two others inducted that day were sent to basic training in Clearwater, Florida. Except that he did not go to basic training; instead he was sent to Biloxi, Mississippi and then to Love Field near Dallas, Texas for aviation training. His assignment was going to be as a flight engineer in a B-17. All the others in his class were assigned

as members of ground crews. Flight crew members were different in regards to the kind of advanced training they received. Joe learned how to fire and maintain the twin-mounted 50-caliber machine guns in the top turret, the twin fifties in the ball turret, and the waist guns. He was not trained as a gunner but as a flight mechanic, but they told him that he would soon learn on the job, and he quickly got the hang of the machine guns. Top turret gunnery practice was at towed gliders above the desert floor near Blythe, California; and belly turret gunnery was at targets on the ground.



Joe Foder (center) with his B-17 crew

Following just enough training to get his crew to the next stage for a combat assignment, Joe and his crew made ready for deployment to their advanced base in Chelveston, England. A colored photo of that entire crew hangs on the living room wall in Joe's house in Imperial, PA; and Joe patiently pointed out each and every member to an amazed **Footloose Forester** who could not pick out the 22-year-old Joe Fodor. After guessing wrong three times from among the six enlisted men squatting in front, Joe acknowledged that he was the blond-headed one, third from the left. Joe then identified the pilot, co-pilot, communications officer and the navigator; all of whom stood in the back line. The officers were all lieutenants who subsequently played into the grand story that spanned decades. Joe described his crew in such a way that anyone could tell that it was a family that would never be forgotten.

Joe's first bombing mission out of Chelveston Air Base with the 305<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group was under the command of General Curtis LeMay. That relationship was short-lived; and although Curtis LeMay had started the 305<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, he was soon thereafter re-assigned to command the USAF program of

brand new B-29s that were destined to begin their combat history in the Pacific Theatre. As the incredible history of Joe Fodor continued to unfold, one brief story at a time, he then mentioned to an astonished **Footloose Forester** that he had witnessed the first flight of the prototype B-29 at Seattle, Washington. And it was the first crash of a B-29, killing all nine civilian Boeing test pilots/engineers as the pilot clipped the top of a meat packing plant near the runway. But because the B-29 as a military secret was still in the production phase at the time, the Pittsburgh newspaper reported that the plane that had crashed was a B-17. Joe's family was very worried because they knew he was in Seattle undergoing training in B-17s.

That first bombing mission out of Chelveston was to attack enemy shipyards on the French coast near LeHavre. Some days later, the second was to hit an industrial complex at Emdom, on the North Sea near Bremen, Germany. A few days later, and on only his third mission, Joe Fodor and his B-17 were shot down over Cologne, Germany.

Earlier in the morning of 4 October 1943, Joe and his crew penetrated deep into Germany to conduct the first-ever daylight B-17 bombing raid on Frankfurt. Flak was heavy but, in his group, only Joe's plane was hit. He saw two other bombers in other formations go down. German fighter planes sensed the easy targets and zeroed in on Joe's stricken bomber. Soon afterward, pilot Clyde Bailey motioned to Joe, who was occupying the top gun turret, to go to the back of the plane and notify the seven other crew members to bail out. Communication by inter-com radio was not possible because the intercom had been shredded. Returning back to the cockpit to report, Joe noticed that pilot Bailey had already jumped, but co-pilot Fred Maas had not. Lieutenant Maas announced forcefully that he was not going to jump but intended to nurse the bomber back to England. Joe joined him in the cockpit in the pilot's seat, so as to assist the co-pilot in flying the plane. They got as far north as Cologne.

In the time interval since their plane was hit by flak over Frankfurt and they had to bail out over Cologne, Joe's B-17 was harassed by at least one Messerschmitt ME-109. Three of the crew members were killed: tail gunner Doskus; ball turret gunner Hall; and assistant radioman Sayles, apparently while still in the tail section and after Joe told them to bail out. A fourth crew member, the navigator Lt. Pickering, died outside the plane when his parachute failed to open. Assistant flight engineer Dapkowicz was badly wounded in the right arm but managed to parachute safely. He was later repatriated to the United States in a prisoner exchange. Joe Fodor and Frank Maas finally bailed out when their bomber burst into flames over Cologne.

Joe jumped first and looked back to see his plane swooping down in a slow wide arc, with fire in the tail section. As he floated down, he saw the face of the German ME-109 pilot who had finally done them in. The pilot circled nearby and waved. Joe waved back. Then the ME-109 pilot circled upward toward the parachute of Lt. Maas, who was the last person to abandon the crippled B-17. Again, the German pilot waved; this time to Lt. Maas. Joe watched from below as Lt. Frank Maas waved back. Finally, Joe Fodor watched as the B-17E nosed down and crashed into a fiery ball in the center of Cologne.

Some stories are so incredible that it becomes difficult to grasp all of the implications. Joe Fodor will never forget exactly where he was at 1:00PM on 4 October 1943. He was floating down in a parachute as it drifted toward the center of Cologne, Germany. And he was worried that his chute might snag on the towering 515-foot tall twin spires of the historic Cathedral of Cologne, begun in the year 1248. That magnificent gothic cathedral had been spared by the Allies and was, and still is, the civic pride of Cologne. Historical accounts may mention that it was heavily damaged during the war, but on that day, it was intact except that the windows were boarded up to prevent from being shattered. As Joe and Lt. Maas floated to the ground, civilians on hand later commented that they thought that he or Lt. Maas, or both, would be impaled on one of the spires; or be swept into the Rhine River not far from the city center.

Both American airmen from their downed B-17 bomber landed safely but soon were captured and spent the next 19 months as prisoners of war. Joe remembers being sent to Bonn and then to Frankfurt for interrogation, where he was photographed and given a registration number before being sent to Stalag-17. The photo below was taken from ransacked files at Stalag-17 when the camp was being evacuated in 1945.



Interrogation photo of Joe Fodor, taken in Frankfurt, Germany in 1943

For Joe Fodor, being a prisoner of war and, as an enlisted man, meant being sent to a POW camp so infamous that many moviegoers will relate to it by name—Stalag 17. There was a special unit at

Stalag-17B, the name by which Joe remembers it, that was reserved for enlisted American airmen; and Joe met other airmen there who confirmed to him that except for the three crew members who perished inside the bomber when it was strafed by the ME-109, and the navigator whose parachute failed to open, all the others who bailed out landed safely. But all six of them became prisoners of war. The three surviving officers were sent to a special officers' POW camp for American aviators, and the enlisted men were sent to Stalag-17B in Krems, Austria. Sad to say, almost all of Joe Fodor's old friends who he knew in the POW camps are dead now. There were three other men from the area around Imperial, Pennsylvania who were also in Stalag-17, but only Steve Korba from nearby Neville Island is still alive.

As the war began to wind down in the spring of 1945, things got a bit quieter around Stalag-17. The Germans knew by then that they would lose the war and they made plans to evacuate Stalag-17, and those plans also included marching the approximately 5,000 American prisoners toward Germany and the American lines. The Russians were advancing from the east and Joe Fodor was empathic as he related his story to the **Footloose Forester**, what he was told by the Germans themselves: that the Germans did not want to be captured by the Russians, whom they feared. So, in late March or early April, 1945 Joe Fodor and some 5,000 captured American airmen began a long march on foot toward the American lines.

They walked for many, many days. Joe doesn't remember how many; but the evacuation route was over 200 miles long. Emaciated prisoners walked by day and they slept in the woods at night. Along the way, there were a few events that he does remember clearly. At one stage, an elderly German guard who was actually quite friendly, by Joe's account, pointed to a small white house high on a hillside above the road and said that was the very house in which Adolf Hitler was born. The information proved to be false, however, but the Austrian Government has retained Hitler's actual birthplace nearby in the little town of Braunau, Austria, for historical purposes.

At another time, as the columns of prisoners were taking a break near a functioning German Luftwaffe base, somewhere between Linz and Salzburg, several young German pilots came out from behind the gates and chatted with the Americans, in English. Some had studied in the United States, and quite a few of the younger Germans spoke good English. Joe had noticed several ME-109s and Focke-Wulf 190s on the tarmac, so when two American P-51 Mustangs swooped over them, nobody was alarmed. Out of curiosity, Joe asked why the pilots did not scramble to intercept the two lonely P-51s, since the Germans had plenty of pilots and plenty of planes available; and the war was still going on. The answer, the young pilots told him, was that they didn't have any fuel; and besides when they did get some fuel,



they always saved it for attacking the Russians to the east. If this story sounds like it was made up, that is part of the irony of war. Give full credit to Joe Fodor for telling a true story so forcefully and vividly that the incredulous **Footloose Forester** was astounded by how surreal the situation was.

One other story is worth noting, lest anyone doubt that the truth is sometimes stranger than fiction. When Joe Fodor was on that long road to repatriation in Austria in the spring of 1945, he met up with a German soldier who lived in Cleveland, Ohio. He was an American citizen who was forced to join the German army as a young man when his family, then vacationing in Germany when the war broke out, was not permitted to leave. He approached the American prisoners and asked if anyone in the group came from Cleveland, Ohio. When one prisoner said that he was from Cleveland, the German/American soldier asked him what street he lived on. Both of them lived, or had lived, on the same street in Cleveland and went to the same school. In a final bit of irony, the American in a German uniform announced loudly that he would beat all of them back to Cleveland.

Four of the Fodor brothers from Imperial, Pennsylvania fought in World War II, all the way to the end. All survived to tell other tales.

Update: April 2018

The last time we passed by Joe Fodor's house in Imperial, Pennsylvania, there was no sign of activity. Chances are he and his wife passed on. He would have been 96 and that is precisely the reason why the **Footloose Forester** wanted to keep his memory alive. At the time when we were still polishing up the interview notes in 2012, the **Footloose Forester** knocked on the back door to get Joe's attention. There was no sound so after a few minutes he turned to go back to his car. Joe was in back of him, beads of perspiration on his brow. Without elaboration, he said he was out back mowing the lawn. It was a push mower that he navigated in cleats up and down his decidedly steep lawn. **Footloose Forester** may have been flabbergasted to know that a 90-year-old man would think nothing of it, but truth is stranger than fiction. Of all the mental images he retains of Joe Fodor, that quiet appearance of an unassuming man is the most overpowering.

Finally, in mid-2018 we learned that Joe had passed about three years ago. His beloved Alice, wife of 65 years, passed just two or three weeks ahead of him. Joe Fodor probably died of a broken heart.



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## INCOMING TIDE

There is no telling by looking around you whether or not the tides matter to most people you talk to in the tiny enclaves surrounding Chincoteague Bay, Virginia. To be sure, the watermen who make their living in the bay pay attention to the tides, insofar as tending their oyster beds and crab pots are concerned. Getting convenient visual access to oyster beds is not only best at dead low tide but getting to the beds in shallow water is faster and less physically taxing at low tide. The environmental health of Chincoteague Bay, only one of many appendages of the much larger Chesapeake Bay, has held steady in recent decades, one reason why oyster production has tripled in the past few years. Presumably what is good for oysters is also good for crabs, although the production of crabs depends upon more than water quality alone. In any case, the watermen who farm oysters and those who mine for crabs in relatively shallow water are keenly aware of the ebb and flow of the tides as they pertain to their daily lives.

Sport fishermen; on the other hand, do not seem to be so keenly aware of tides as a critical factor in planning their outdoor activities. More important to them are water temperature and seasonal migrations of favorite fishes that are influenced by changes in water temperature. Most sport fishermen have a vague idea about the seasons when flounder or croakers predominate, but usually don't go so far as to construct equations that factor in seasons of the year and the best tidal features that might maximize their chances for success.

Not to be totally contrarian about the ideal tides for fishing, the **Footloose Forester** does at least want to mention the range of arguments that he has heard over the years. According to seasoned and successful fishermen he has known, the best time to go fishing in tidal waters is:

- On the incoming tide when food sources are transported from the ocean and estuaries
- At mid-tide when the maximum rate of food source loading from outside also maximizes dispersal patterns
- At the end of the incoming tide when the maximum volume of food sources is available
- At change tide when sediments in the current begin to settle on the bottom, increasing visibility
- On the outgoing tide when unutilized food sources are dislodged from the bottom and begin to flow in the currents, in the opposite direction
- At mid-tide as, outgoing flow has reached the maximum rate of flow of the dislodged and uncaptured food sources in the currents
- At change tide as fishes position themselves for the anticipated influx of food sources on the next tide

The list above is a little bit of tongue-in-cheek only because the advocates for fishing on an incoming tide are not likely to give the time of day to those who advocate for fishing on the outgoing tides, and vice versa. If truth be known, however; most sport fishermen are not so dogmatically set in their ways to totally ignore the other options. For most of us, we go fishing when we have the time and the opportunity to do so, within the limits of other constraints such as proximity to fishing grounds, the vagaries of weather, and the necessary enthusiasm to devote the time. But it always helps to know that the chances of being rewarded with a basket of fish also goes a long way in making the decision to undertake a fishing trip.

The initial reason for sitting down to pen this chronicle has to do with knowing enough about the local tides to say that in this region where we live, there is a fair chance that most of the people, including sport fishermen, can't tell an incoming tide from an outgoing tide. Inasmuch as the rise and fall of tides is barely perceptible in the short run, only people who truly have an interest in the tides are willing to say whether the tide is rising, falling, at change tide; is seasonally high during its peaks at high tide; or seasonally low at normal low tides. And forget about a quick look at a tidal chart for the day that might be under discussion. For Chincoteague Bay, the exact time of low tide on any given day depends on where

you are standing on dry ground to observe the water depth. There are at least 18 different tidal gauging stations, thus 18 separate times when low tide occurs, according to the tide charts.

Another important reason why knowing more about tides is desirable is because the **Footloose Forester** and his regular fishing companions have had their share of disagreements about when the tide was coming in or going out; and even if it was an incoming tide or outgoing tide at a location where nobody could even agree where the entrance/exit channel of Chincoteague Bay was in relation to the tides.

The latest comment about the apparently incoming tide that was made by the **Footloose Forester** was refuted by his fishing partner who said that the direction of the current at the time made it an outgoing tide. Rather than get into a argument with his beloved Bengal Tiger there and then, the **Footloose Forester** decided to settle the argument once and for all time by subsequently consulting the daily tidal chart for the relevant gauging station; and for the precise time when we departed from it. By the way, we vacated our fishing spot by wading in shallow water to reach dry land from our casting positions on the exposed rocks near the water line. When we had arrived about 2 ½ hours earlier, the current was running left to right under the adjacent highway bridge and we reached the outer rocks in wet, muddy soil. When we departed, the current was easing but still flowed from left to right. Our wet feet in ankle deep water upon departure told one of us that we departed at mid-tide during an incoming tide. The ensuing disagreement did not change, one reason why it seemed prudent to find and archive the evidence in the form of the tidal chart. There will be other disagreements in the future but in the final analysis it is best to have the evidence at hand to settle arguments. Which direction the current flows in an incoming tide in Chincoteague Bay is important for us to know because we intend to go fishing and clamming often when the tides are ideal.

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## GRASS CLIPPINGS, FERTILIZER, GREEN MANURE

Tis now the season when homeowners around the country get out the lawn mowers, fertilizer spreaders, and weed whackers in their yearly quest to make their lawns more presentable.

Mowing the lawn is usually the first step: a starting point to kill off weeds as well as getting more direct exposure to the surface of the ground that may benefit from fresh grass seed, or a weed & feed product that promises to beautify the lawn while simplifying the process. New grass seed may be desirable in some cases; and weed & feed is a tried and true approach, but we should not ignore the other fundamentals in lawn care that may not get much attention.

It doesn't matter much what kind of mower is used, the results are the same—cut grass. That assumes of course that their lawns are of grass. Many desert dwellers have lawns but it would be a bit speculative to say that what passes for a lawn is necessarily composed of grass. In any case, the usual lawn maintenance contrivances are usually present; to achieve the expected appearance of a typical lawn. But what to do with the grass clippings? Collect them and put them into trash bags to be hauled away? Or save the clippings to be put into a compost pile? Or allow the clippings to be returned to the lawn as you mow?

Mulching devices on many power mowers allow the user to collect the clippings and/or create mulch for return directly into the soil. It is convenient to have several options; but it is unfortunate that many people don't take advantage of the options, or even consider the merits of options. The grass clippings are, after all, useful resources that can be used in various environmentally friendly ways.

Grass clippings that are returned directly into the soil as mulch can also be considered as “green manure” that fertilizes the lawn immediately after it is cut. Fortunately, there is a higher concentration of plant

nutrients found in the tips of grass plants than elsewhere in the grass plant. Returning the grass clippings directly back into the soil as fresh green manure thus decreases the overall demand for fertilizer; and when considered as mulch, the fresh clippings help to maintain the moisture content in the soil while simultaneously shielding surface areas vulnerable to weeds.

Collected clippings can also be used as mulch for targeted areas around the base of lawn chairs, ornaments, and along borders where weeds tend to gain an advantage. The green color of the clippings provides an aesthetically pleasing blanket while serving the same essential role as the lawn itself. Also, a layer of grass clippings in bare spots effectively hides obvious blemishes and discourages weeds from taking over.

When we stop to think about it, many things in nature have related, linked purposes with intrinsic values. The mowing and maintenance of lawns is an example of biotic interactions that exist in feedback loops that we should not take for granted.

Finally, when we think of and use the grass clippings in our front and rear lawns as inputs in the natural loop of biological processes, we eliminate the need to dispose of them as trash to be hauled away or to be dumped into a landfill somewhere.

After more than 40 years of practicing what he has preached, the **Footloose Forester** can say that he has never had to dispose of grass clippings beyond the confines of his own lawn. And he has never had a problem with a buildup of thatch because grass clipping eventually break down and become incorporated into the soil, actually improving the physical structure of the soil matrix and its chemical balance. That is to say, the nutrients in the grass clippings break down; are transformed and mobilized into elements and compounds that are then taken up as fertilizer by the existing stand of grass. The overall process has never failed.

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## COUNTDOWN TO MORE SWEAT

Getting started on a job that will likely promote sweat involves a short span of personal contemplation. The upcoming job may be one of short or long duration, but when real sweat is in the offing the job involves a little planning. We all make plans even if we don't spend much time considering them in a conscious way. Thus, taking on a sweaty job and seeing it to completion usually involves imagining little cues like getting started, next steps, breaking the task into parts, and putting on the finishing touches. The **Footloose Forester** finally decided to include his views here as part of a chronicle.

Taking on a challenge that makes you sweat isn't always about work. A vigorous exercise workout leads to the same place and produces the same sweat. And just contemplating getting started is one of the obstacles to overcome. Standing inertia is the first obstacle. And just like a job staring you in the face, exercise routines have beginning moves, intermediate steps, and a completion phase. The sweat comes during the journey.

When you look back on all of your previous jobs and exercise sessions, you might realize that stopping for a break was also part of most episodes, even if breaks were not planned. We listen to our bodies and when our bodies tell us that we are out of breath, we have to stop. When our muscles refuse to push harder or longer, we ease off. And if we injure ourselves, the session quickly comes to an end. We all have our limits and sometimes those limits define themselves. At other times, we can choose the limits and set them as goals.

In regard to setting goals for an exercise routine, we formulate plans in our heads that we don't have to acknowledge to anybody in advance. As we progress we learn something of our personal limits but

also about our expanded goals which should be part of a strengthening strategy. Starting at one rep, the typical routine involves counting upward until the goal is reached. The sweat may pour out unnoticed but was fully expected as part of the package. Getting to 100 push-ups, for example, requires keeping track of the count so that you can proceed to the next exercise with a sense of fulfillment. Never mind the sweat. A break in the action, in the case of a session with multiple routines, is merely a pause in the countdown to more sweat.

Setting intermediate goals while mountain hiking (non-technical climbs) also made use of counting steps until that goal was reached. Most often the goal was 200 steps forward or upward before taking a break, but when he was becoming exhausted, the **Footloose Forester** listened to his body and reduced the goal to 100, or even 50 steps before stopping. He did that when ascending Mt. Kilimanjaro (19,341 ft. or 5895 m) in 1993. He was dead last in the group that reached the summit, but he was determined to finish what he had set out to do. Even at a chilly 20° F, there was sweat enough because there were countdowns enough.

Achievement beckons slowly in our brains. Progress is slow but steady in the early stages but grows into more certainty as we huff and puff along. But we weaken as we near our goal and it may be prudent to reduce our goals. Instead of questing for a goal of 100 push-ups, we may be forced to acknowledge that we should stop at 75. Maybe that voice in our head is telling us to ease up, back off, or quit.

Sweat sessions that are associated with mowing our lawn in rural Virginia have many of the same features as rigorous exercise routines. The goal is the attainment of a properly mowed lawn, one fragmented enough to require breaking it into parcels and big enough to require re-filling the small gas tank on the lawn mower. Huffing and puffing are part of the routine, thus sweating on a hot summer day goes without saying. In this case, achievement comes only after the lawn is mowed to a uniform height. Rather than counting upward to that goal, the **Footloose Forester** has, over the years, used a countdown system to get to the goal line. Six more lines to cut before I'm finished with this section, five more to go, only four now...and the section will be finished. Then I can take a rest before starting on the next section.

Taking a rest is very much-anticipated, the older that the **Footloose Forester** gets. He welcomes the opportunity to tackle physical challenges like mowing the lawn and to demonstrate to himself that he is



physically fit, but he also knows that he will huff and puff, strain and sweat. And that the rest period is a brief interlude pursuant to a countdown to more sweat. The cold beer is never more satisfying than when it is presented to him by his loving wife, the Bengal Tiger, but he also knows that all good things must come to an end. Thus, the purposeful countdown to more sweat begins. He sets the goal of counting slowly backward from 20 to 0. The rest period ticks away from the arbitrary minimum time he thinks that he needs to overcome his inertia. By the time the countdown to more sweat reaches zero, he is resolved to get to his feet and finish the job. Working up a sweat by counting push-ups is one way to attain a goal, and a countdown to more sweat is another way that works.

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## 1998 BOMBING OF THE US EMBASSY IN NAIROBI

Many years have passed since Al Qaida pulled off the attempted bombing of the US Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya. They didn't manage to bring down the embassy building but they did manage to inflame the passions of the world that led to a severe weakening of Al Qaida and its message of hatred.

Regardless of what most people now remember about the 7 August 1998 bombing in Nairobi, strong visual reminders of that day remain in archival records. Unfortunately, the Newsweek photo of devastation shown below is not one of the US Embassy building itself, but that of a Kenyan business college building that was located adjacent to the embassy. A 100-foot-wide walking mall separated the two buildings, sparing the US Embassy except for several windows that were blown out and extensive interior damage. Indeed, there were people killed (12) within the embassy by flying and shattered glass, but the building itself was otherwise intact after the bombing. Sadly, 218 students and staff of the Kenyan Business College were killed when their building crashed to the ground into a huge mound of rubble.

Alternative perspectives of the rubble and the still standing US Embassy building are available in various photo formats.

The left rear corner of the US Embassy building is revealed in a Newsweek photo (not shown) and another photo taken in August 1998, as shown here.

Some distorted headlines about the Nairobi bombing at the time gave the false impression that the rubble shown was the remains of the US Embassy. Inasmuch as this short chronicle has been deferred for 18 years does not lessen the veracity of its message: the carnage was horrendous but some photos misrepresent the facts on the ground.

Time will not lessen the sadness of that event in 1998. For the **Footloose Forester** it sadly marks another place where he once stood, walked, and even conducted business; only to have terrorist atrocities visit that same ground. Other places where death and destruction followed the **Footloose Forester** were at the Dominican Roman Catholic Church in Bahawalpur, Pakistan, the US Embassy in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania; and a beach hotel near Mombasa, Kenya.



Some chronicles are rough and unpolished, much like this one is turning out to be. Until the story is related satisfactorily with other comparative photos of the rubble, many people will continue to believe that the US Embassy building was destroyed that day in August, 1988. Nonetheless, it is time to convert this sad story from a draft into a reminder that the world is still a dangerous place and our enemies continue to plot against us.

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*By Dick Pellek*

## CONFESSION OF A PRACTICAL JOKER

The text of the following spoof was culled from the black heart of a practical joker who calls himself the **Footloose Forester**. He sometimes risked official displeasure with his propensity to see the humor in many real-world situations; therefore, he rationalized his antics by saving them for special occasions.... like April Fool's Day.

This one was sent in the inter-office mail with the format of a National Enquirer story, newspaper banners, columns, fonts; and all. It arrived in the USAID Director's office on the first day of April, 1988.

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Apr.1 -USAID Director Perry Garr today signed a \$10 million grant to support CARP, Caring Americans' Relief Program, in launching a massive project whose technical components have already been identified as unworkable. Informed sources in Haiti said that project WRASSE (Western Region Assistance to Salt Sector Enhancement) techniques had been tried a number of times before and had all failed. The USAID grant would also lead to failure, they warned.

The WRASSE project would involve growing marine macro algae for export. In principle, CARP plans to grow macro algae in beds on salt flats adjacent to the inlet Anse Poisson in Northwest Haiti where CARP has been doing humanitarian work for many years. Macro algae are a delicacy in great demand among young, upwardly mobile German professionals (nicknamed guppies) who encouraged CARP to capitalize on use of the salt resources of the region. By treating the algae with local salt taken from adjacent salt beds, the preservation of the algae during shipping is assured, and the salt would be guaranteed a market. The scheme thus catches two fish with one hook. However, detractors of the project noted that macro algae are not part of the Haitian diet and there was nothing in it for the small fry except temporary jobs that

had no technology transfer value. Also, many peasants whom NATIONAL ENQUIRER interviewed in Anse Poisson carped about satisfying the taste buds of decadent foreigners. Appeal for the project, except for the jobs angle, is as flat as a flounder. Furthermore, major disruptions can be expected from feral swine that roam freely throughout the area. Porgy pigs, at one time thought to be entirely eradicated from Haiti, relish macro algae and would roam through the unprotected algae beds at night, eating their fill and contaminating the beds in the process. No provision was made in the CARP grant for fencing.

## A FISH OUT OF WATER

When challenged about the potential waste under the newly signed grant, USAID Director Garr was as slippery as an eel, but acknowledged being misled about events leading up to the signing. The junior USAID project official who actually set up the terms of reference for the CARP grant was re-assigned to Bolivia late last year, where he is now supervising the construction of pots for Rocky Mountain oysters that were imported by USAID into the Andean region to diversify protein sources. The official, Herbie Simplex, was not available for comment. During the NATIONAL ENQUIRER interview with Orville Wrong, USAID Director Garr acknowledged that something definitely smelled fishy with the CARP grant agreement and said he was lured into signing the grant. In the coming months he will be angling to get a better line on the facts, he pledged. "In the meantime," Garr was quoted as saying, "it looks like we were taken for suckers-- we swallowed the bait, hook, line and sinker."

## CLAMMING UP

The ENQUIRER reporter also sought out the USAID technical advisor who originally fished for the facts that labeled the CARP angle as a red herring. But when approached for comment, the advisor at first was very crabby and then unexpectedly clammed up. Lon Gouste, who is on contract to USAID, claimed that the subject was an old kettle of fish; then the advisor tried to wiggle off the hook by claiming he was leaving Haiti because he had other fish to fry.

## LEFT DANGLING ON A HOOK

ENQUIRER reporter Wrong then dropped a line to Angel Fische, the director of CARP in Haiti and another line to her deputy, K. Rill. But neither CARP official took the bait; the correspondence went unanswered; and the issue was left dangling. There are, however, supporters of the project-- CARP

technician Bill Peche, for one. “Your WRASSE project is no fluke,” he claimed. When interviewed, he was wildly enthusiastic. “Holy mackerel, what a whale of a deal for the Haitians!” exclaimed Peche. “On the first day they were packed into the employment lines like sardines, and boatloads of hopefuls were circling the dock at Anse Poisson like sharks waiting to attack.” At this writing, the CARP bark is dropping anchor in Anse Poisson and a swarm of CARP technicians are preparing to tackle the issues in the next phase of WRASSE. It remains to be seen whether or not there will be a bail-out for the CARP seaweed-for-guppies project.

#### Author’s Note:

The spoof of USAID in Haiti was written in 1988 just before April Fool’s Day. On the day before April 1<sup>st</sup>, the bogus text was sent by interoffice mail to the USAID Director so that he would open it up on time to be an April Fool. Probably not many people saw the spoof, disguised as a National Enquirer cover page story about the CARP program and its proposed project with the acronym WRASSE. There are, however, several bizarre facts supporting the initial decision to write a fishy tale about CARP and WRASSE. The following points are part of the factual record.

The **Footloose Forester** was alone in the empty wing of his office one hot summer day in late summer. Someone in another wing of the USAID building sent over an interoffice package with a proposal submitted by the Israeli Embassy in Haiti. In the proposal the Israelis did, indeed, propose to grow seaweed, or macro algae, in the salt flats in the northwest part of Haiti. The proposal also mentioned using the salt resources of the area in processing and drying, prior to sending the macro algae to Israel as an export product. Since this was a juicy story in the making, the **Footloose Forester** decided to emphasize its self-interested objective by making the episode into a parody about those organizations mentioned and certain people in them. Before working on a parody, however, he sent his response back to the USAID official in the other wing of the USAID building. It was a pleasure to nix the proposal, on several grounds. The most important reason for the rejection was because the mission of USAID in Haiti was to benefit Haitians, not the Israelis. The only positive aspect of the proposal that benefitted Haitians was the temporary jobs that would be created. Israelis did, indeed, have seaweed as part of their traditional diets, but Haitians did not. Secondly, they were proposing mining Haitian resources at American taxpayer expense to produce a food product intended to benefit themselves.

Seldom did the **Footloose Forester** get to squash a selfish proposal, single-handedly. Has his boss or a deputy been around to look at it, they may have exercised their mandated authority to act on it, or at least spend more time on it that it truly deserved. Proposals usually went through a committee process, but this one seemed like such a waste of time that it did not deserve further scrutiny. In retrospect, the **Footloose Forester** never again heard anything about this particular Israeli proposal to spend American money.

Now, to the parody and its dissection: The allusions to fish and marine themes, in general, were decided upon because in the Northwest of Haiti, fishing was the main industry. It was true that the region did have sea salt resources that were extracted from a limited number of shallow beds adjacent to the shoreline. But edible seaweed was not a local resource; and there was never any indication that seaweed was part of local diets. In theory, USAID programs were supposed to benefit Haiti and its citizens. In this case, the beneficial links were specious, at best.

Real people were written into the spoof. USAID Director Gerry Zarr became Perry Garr; CARP, the organization, was CARE that for many decades had dominated the humanitarian efforts in the Northwest where the salt resources existed. The CARE Director known in the story as Angel Fische, and her deputy K. Rill, often challenged the findings of the USAID technician Lon Gouste. The **Footloose Forester** was Lon Gouste. A wildly enthusiastic CARP technician known as Bill Peche was a truly enthusiastic Peter Welle, who was idealistic about nearly everything. He and the **Footloose Forester** spent a lot of time debating issues, but Footloose and various other CARE cadres often disagreed about technical aspects. CARE operated a \$10 million project, and often came to USAID for even more money to finance projects that had questionable workability. Getting millions out of USAID did not take too much if a small group was willing to press their agenda; and if USAID advisors like Lon Gouste didn't fight them about concepts that did not and would not fly.

The small port of Anse Rouge in Haiti's Northwest was the one closest to the salt beds, so it became Anse Poisson. There truly were, however, feral pigs in several places in Haiti and they did roam freely and would have become an issue in regard to keeping them out of salt beds. The bare bones proposal by the Israelis did not mention fencing or other protective measures; they merely emphasized the salt beds as a place to grow their seaweed.

And what about the small salt industry in the Northwest? There was no mention in the proposal about alternative places where salt might be dried. In fact, the "sea salt" industry must take advantage of natural conditions whereby nearly level sand beaches are singled out for capturing and evaporating the tidal salt



water. In very few places in the world are the conditions suitable to capture tidal flows and then allow its salt content to evaporate at a pace whereby it becomes economical to wait for that to happen. A cursory check of shorelines around the world with a computer software program like Google Earth would confirm that drying salt adjacent to the shoreline is quite rare.

The soil substrate, itself, must be of a composition to prevent sea water from simply percolating downward at a fast rate. Ironically, sandy beaches are not suitable at all, regardless of their length or depth. Clayey soils adjacent to the ocean have much greater potential for establishing salt drying beds, but such clayey soils in flat expanses are equally rare. In the case of Haiti, giving up those salt beds to grow macro algae would have meant the loss of the entire salt industry. The **Footloose Forester** was not an expert on the salt industry, but he had previously witnessed in situ salt manufacture in Cape Verde and in Senegal. Thus, nobody from any quarter challenged him and his objections about the near-sightedness of the Israeli proposal. Too often, nonetheless, proposal writers disparaged the **Footloose Forester** because he exposed weaknesses in their proposals that they did not want to acknowledge. The reasons for the disparagement were never stated that way, but merely that the **Footloose Forester** was “too negative.” It was always easier to dismiss the messenger than to successfully argue a case for their message.

Finally, the use of the news stories as reported by Orville Wrong (**Footloose Forester** in the act of creating an April Fool’s joke); and a real one by journalist Alan Writing in the National Enquirer format was merely intended to catch the eye of the reader. The Alan Writing story was reprinted word-for word—up to a point -- from an actual New York Times story that appeared a few days before April 1<sup>st</sup>. It was a true red herring, intended to cast doubt about whether both stories were possibly fishy. **Footloose Forester** was criticized by his brother for plagiarizing an actual New York Times story, but Footloose pleaded that without guileless humor, there would be no April Fool’s jokes.

*A to Z Word Potpourri*  
*Essays, Stories, Adventures, Dreams*  
*Chronicles of a Footloose Forester*  
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## VIRTUAL TREKKING WITH GOOGLE EARTH

When Google, Inc. changed their policy in December of 2015 in regard to the open use of satellite photos within their Google Earth computer program, it opened the floodgates for storytellers who want to share their adventures. It is now permissible to use photos and adaptations of photos and maps captured from Google Earth and Google Maps to illustrate stories with geospatial references that are germane to the story.

A long-repressed desire to return to the rocky crags of the Zugspitze in the Bavarian Alps can now be fulfilled in virtual reality and immediately shared with readers who have an interest in trekking; an interest in mountain climbing; and an interest in re-visiting old haunts. Seeing the route up to the top of the Zugspitze can be done on a paper map or a computer monitor; but trekking the route can also be accomplished in virtual reality. The **Footloose Forester** knows that it is possible to climb the Zugspitze in virtual mountain climbing mode because he has done it several times. He also knows the way because he made that climb more than 50 years ago. Thanks to Google Earth, storytelling has just opened up an exciting new chapter in the art of writing.

This dream induced chronicle began as a draft; but was expanded and revised as ideas poured forth from the hard-wired memories of the **Footloose Forester** who is excited about revisiting the Zugspitze and other places in virtual reality.

The trekking adventures now encouraged under revised Google Earth policies are not limited by still photos. Meter by meter virtual progress along a mountain climbing route can be facilitated by using an embedded flight simulator. Although the simulated speed of the mock aircraft is a bit too fast to catch

all the twists and turns, the flight pattern already tested by the **Footloose Forester** led him to conclude that doing a virtual trek is possible from beginning to end. In addition, it is possible to pause the virtual flight to look around, left or right, to see additional ground features.

Once the user of Google Earth is satisfied that both the photo resolution and the simulated flight are efficacious, he/she can make the climb for themselves. Whereas a still photo may entice a reader to consult with Google Earth directly, a printed map of the route will become a kinetic virtual reality when the climbing route is followed in the flight simulator within the Google Earth program. Go to latitude 47° 25' 37" N and longitude 10° 58' 44" E to get started but be sure to zoom in for spectacular clarity of the rock faces.

Before he goes too far afield, the **Footloose Forester** also wants to mention that Google Earth can be used to zoom down to details on the ground in cities and small towns, with the aid of their embedded Street View mode. He was able to read the street number of the small apartment building where he lived in Honolulu, merely by following one of the marked Google routes mapped from a moving car, in one of Street View's many project files.

Sometimes the data on satellite photos is so far out of date that the reality on the ground does not always match the data on the photo. Buildings get demolished in bombing raids, residential areas get torn up in tornados, glaciers advance and recede. To overcome some of those inconsistencies, Google Earth keeps a large inventory of historical photos that match the geospatial identities of ground features of interest. For example, the US Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya that was bombed by terrorists in August 1998 was torn down and replaced with the August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park, but Google Earth users can see satellite photos of both the original embassy building and the latter-day park, also called Bomb Blast Park. In pre-1998 satellite photos the embassy building was shown standing; and in the various Google Earth photos subsequent to 1998 the exact spot shows only the August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park. The **Footloose Forester** knew where to look on the satellite photo scenes of Nairobi because he visited that embassy many times during the years when he was working in Kenya. In fact, his office was on the same street and just a few blocks away. Thus, he had, and still has, a special interest in before-after photos with geospatial references. For the record, that sorrowful piece of terrain is located at latitude 1° 17' 20.74" S and longitude 36° 49' 36.96" E. A photo of the park from above is shown below.



August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park in Nairobi is outlined in green

One last morsel of anticipation has arisen. The **Footloose Forester** wants to re-enact launching a paraglider from the rim of Fogo Volcano in the Cape Verde Archipelago. He had previously confirmed that the Google Earth flight simulator permitted him to launch silently from the rim of the volcano, glide for 8.3 miles on an azimuth of 230 degrees, and land on a strip of black sand beach, in a virtually simulated flight that had all the precisely known and required parameters needed for success. Because the virtual flight requires the “pilot” to maintain proper speed and altitude to avoid crashing, planning and executing the flight are legitimate concerns. To attain the thrill, however; the virtual pilot must be at the controls in flight simulation mode; because the volcano named Fogo is real, the ideal place for launching a paraglider is real; and the obstacles on the ground are real.

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## DETECTING THE VILE IN GREENBACKVILLE

No, this chronicle is not an exposé about sinister happenings perpetrated by vile residents in the sleepy little fishing village of Greenbackville, Virginia. Our fair hamlet of a mere 192 residents (2010 Census) is not found on most maps because it does not appear on the radar of cities and towns, or of place names of note. The gazetteers who compile such data usually start with a minimum number, and we are probably well below that minimum, whatever it is. It does appear, however, as a census-designated place, but you would have to zoom in very close on a Google Earth satellite photo to attain the gratification that comes with knowing that we do exist. Just count the houses for yourself and you would agree that our hamlet is so little that it may not justify having a US Post Office that services more people from out of town than it does those who live within the “city” limits.

The US Postal Service first recognized Greenbackville back in 1874, perhaps one reason why postal services are still offered, but the days when oysters, crabs, and clams were shipped by rail to Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York are now in the remote past.

Our nearby bedroom community of approximately 1200 part-time and full-time residents is outside of town, but we inhabitants of Captain’s Cove have Greenbackville as our official mailing address. Thus, there is a point to be made regarding the spelling of that address. Friends and relatives have occasionally asked if we really did live in a town named Greenbackvile. About half of our correspondence comes with mailing labels that show the misspelled computer-generated name of Greenbackvile, rather than Greenbackville.

We were always curious about why that improperly spelled address continues to persist. And it was not a case of us sharing the incorrect spelling; we have tried to get it corrected, but to no avail. Computers don't seem to take to timely advice. If a key punch operator puts it in as Greenbackvile, it seems to stay that way for months and even years. Stale mail addressed to the former owner of our house is also addressed incorrectly as Greenbackvile; so it is not just us.

If it were not for the fact that **Footloose Forester** tried unsuccessfully for eleven years to have his erstwhile California bank change his mailing address, he might not make such an issue about a minor misspelling. What concerns him more is that when you get official correspondence with important messages that may or may not have legal ramifications, the authorities tend to side with the institutions that show an address that is different than the one you are claiming. That, also, has happened before. You initially provide the mailing address but getting it changed as an official correction is harder than it should be. It should not take years, but sometimes it does. Unfortunately, the mailing labels come unsolicited, but half of them have the wrong address.

That brings us back to the vile in Greenbackvile. Just today, when **Footloose Forester** checked the online computer record of his application for a Virginia Fisherman Identification card, he discovered that although he typed in Greenbackvile as our residence address, the PDF file that got printed out says that we live in Greenbackvile, Virginia. No mistake about it; if you compare your own input with the printed output coming out from Richmond where the Virginia offices are located, you will note that the spellings are different. Until the software routine in Richmond is corrected, we will always have something to laugh about when the dozens of pre-printed label packets and solicitations in our mailbox are addressed to the vile residents of Greenbackvile, Virginia. As is too common, mailing lists are frequently shared with commercial entities who are all too happy to perpetuate the mistake. These days we get literally hundreds of return address mailing labels that show our address in Greenbackvile, Virginia. The one shown below is too obvious to miss.



Publishers Clearinghouse is a big player, but always spells it wrong

If we are diligent and patient enough, we are capable of discovering larger truths that we were not actively seeking. Today in early May 2016 the **Footloose Forester** confirmed that at least three other residents of Captain's Cove receive mail addressed to them in Greenbackvile, VA. One woman who has lived here since last October has gotten Greenbackvile mail since her first day; an old timer who has been here over six years showed me his envelopes, several of which had the incorrect spelling; another four-year resident had the inconspicuous error; and the author of this little ditty is going on four years with no let up on incorrectly addressed mail that has commercial, governmental, and company origins.

UPDATE: 26 November 2016

Of course, there are those living here that deny having at least some of their mail come to them with the misspelled mailing address. The **Footloose Forester** challenged one woman by betting a quarter that the stack of junk mail she was holding had at least one item of bulk mail that was improperly addressed. My bet was a quarter, and she said that she would bet her life on it (that she didn't have any). Good thing that she didn't take that bet; she gets the same kinds of junk mail that we do. Finally, after a few more residents were challenged to take a close look at their very own mailing addresses, the **Footloose Forester** has decided to let the matter rest. Every single one of them had at least some mail addressed to them in Greenbackvile. As for the lady who bet her life on not having any at all, methinks that she owes the **Footloose Forester** a quarter.



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## AND NOW ON STAGE ...IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

Let me introduce the actors, as they appear on stage. From somewhere beyond the green curtain of shrubbery comes a red-headed woodpecker. He appears stage left where the biggest bird feeder is perched atop a metal pole. Next appears a female cardinal, off on the silvered feeder at the right of the stage, the one hanging from the native persimmon tree. She is joined momentarily by a brightly colored male North American Cardinal, an audience favorite. As the state bird of the Commonwealth of Virginia, he comes quite frequently, often singing his distinctive melody. A goldfinch joins them for a brief moment, but soon is gone. But the feeder is never idle too long. Stage right then is filled by a house sparrow and a chubby little English Sparrow.

As the entire stage begins to fill with frenzied activity, another cardinal appears at the big feeder, stage left. Two black-capped chickadees join in the feast of seed corn, sun flower seed and field grains. They usually take turns coming and going, but sometimes one or two of them will occupy the narrow shelf on one side of the feeder, while another bird or two occupies the other side. The large wooden feeder with plexiglass sides and a deep, generous canister is easy to spot from afar. The actors know at a glance when it is full and when the rations are depleted.

Finally, center stage draws the attention of the audience, as the guest star red-headed woodpecker finds the center bird feeder dangling from the loblolly pine tree. He is alone. It seems fitting that his brief soliloquy is acted out on center stage, where our eyes momentarily focus; and the supporting cast fills the stage in quieted movements.

Other actors come and go, moving to the rhythm of the grand dance that has been set into motion. There are black birds, sparrows, chickadees, grackles, other cardinals ... so many familiar ones that they sometimes go unnoticed. At today's performance, the audience was also pleased to see two budding actors, costumed in the finery of Carolina Wrens. They are quite new to our stage, but we expect to see them back. In addition, yesterday one of our favorite actors showed up, perhaps for rehearsal. A bright and healthy bluebird posed for a moment on the support stake where the transplanted kiwi vine is taking hold in its new abode. The blue bird has not yet appeared on stage with the others, but we are hopeful that such talented actors will delight us with many more appearances on our back-yard stage.

Another day, another performance. Other actors show up to play their roles in ways that are familiar. Yesterday it was a red-winged blackbird, one of the actors whose familiar voice has always been a harbinger of spring. Today a dove was noticed, quietly searching for fallen seed under the big feeder at stage left, while high above a flight of blackbirds temporarily took over pecking inside the wooden rails of the homemade feeder. A little later, a real star made a cameo appearance ... it was a Baltimore Oriole. Although the city of Baltimore is not so far away, we have seen only a couple of Baltimore Orioles in the past three years. As spring advances into warmer weather, we expect to be honored by the visits of other distinguished visitors. It may not be possible to remember them all, but we are delighted when they appear on stage, even if it is only fleetingly.

Sometimes it takes a direct comparison to tell one woodpecker from another. Today, for the first time ever, we were thrilled to see a red-headed woodpecker in the morning hours and a red-bellied woodpecker in the afternoon. Not only was it a first sighting of two regional woodpeckers at our new home, but the fact that they appeared on the same day was a pleasant surprise. The **Footloose Forester** had to look them both up with a Google search of woodpeckers, just to be sure that he was not mistaken. No mistake.... we have them both. The red-headed woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*) was the one on the left; and the red-bellied woodpecker (*Melanerpes carolinus*) was on the right.

These chronicles that relate to the sightings of birds are updated, as necessary, to include details that make the saga more interesting, as it develops. Just like a soap opera, there is always another episode being scripted. Yesterday it was about two different species of woodpeckers on the same day, one in the morning and the other in the early evening. Today the soap opera took an unbelievable twist; something that you just can't make up. At about 7:00 AM, the **Footloose Forester** saw the red headed woodpecker perched on a rung of the metal birdfeeder that dangles from a loblolly pine tree while a red-bellied woodpecker

was snacking at another feeding station about five feet away, at the same time. That feeder is suspended from a cord higher up in the same tree. Another first in bird watching at our new home! The story gets better and better, but until we have photos of the birds with our camera, stock photos from my computer will do. We await the great fun of it.

It would be another week before we sighted the first blue grosbeak to visit our yard. He didn't stay long and may not be back if he decides that the circumstances are not to his liking. Only time will tell. On the other hand, the pair of finch feeders we recently purchased (the words finch feeder were on the boxes) finally attracted two legit finches after a week or 10 days of waiting. The binoculars and the bird book told us that the male and female visitors were red-headed finches. Who knows what will show up next. But in keeping with the order of appearance, any newcomers will be announced if we can verify their identities.

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## TAKING THE ALS CHALLENGE

The occasion was the birthday party for 76-year-old **Footloose Forester** who was visiting the Pittsburgh area with his wife. Their main purpose for traveling north from Virginia was to clean up the weediness around their old house, the one in which daughter Lucy was still living, but the birthday party was also on the agenda.

We were staying at the house of Ann, a member of our extended family, since she had five bedrooms and spent most of her time running her thriving salon, Ann's Spa and Nails. Opened less than a year, Ann's Spa was already a success and very popular in the area where clients could come in for a manicure, a pedicure, a facial, a new hair style, or a body waxing. Eight employees kept the spa humming with lively chatter in Vietnamese and English; and plenty of laughter that didn't need any translation. The warm, shared atmosphere is one reason why Ann's clients keep coming back.

One of the youngest technicians was the sparkplug who started the ALS Challenge during the birthday party. Lou Lou Loung, who doesn't mind being called Apple, is a shade under five feet tall but she is a fireball who picked on the **Footloose Forester** to be the first one to get doused with a bucket of ice water. He had already decided he would do it if Apple herself came next; and if everybody at Ann's Spa and Nails would donate to the fight against Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, otherwise known as ALS. It is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that attacks nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord. Ann decided that a \$10 donation per person was suitable, and all of the party going employees agreed to ante up.

Starting with the Birthday Boy, cold ice water was ceremoniously dumped on his head from a large basin. Granddaughter Jaelyn Hunt did the honors, as recorded in the video taken in the waning light. Next

came Apple, who had issued the original challenge. Her short speech prior to being drenched included a further challenge to friends and co-workers. Some of them were listening. Although there was more than a bit of murmured reluctance among the onlookers, the ALS Challenge was met by her boss Ann, and co-worker Stephanie, and friends Lee Le and Brent Jacoby. Even 10-year-old Jaelyn braved the bucket of cold water poured over her head; and she also ponied up with a \$10 donation to fight ALS. Lou Lou, *aka* Apple, then volunteered to get doused a second time. There was a manic and magical wind blowing through the air that night, and the friends and party goers who attended will long remember it.

A couple of dark videos are part of the evidence, locking the time and the laughter into a digital record. Someday, such evidence will become part of the legacy of Ann's Spa and Nails and its happy family of employees who often work and play together.

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## THE SEAGULLS AND THE CLAMS

Our friend Thanh Mahoney related an amusing story to us about one of those “Truth is Stranger Than Fiction” events that might have seemed bizarre when it unfolded but is probably more common than we might otherwise think. Her story goes something like this:

The wooden dock on her property on Chincoteague Island, Virginia is only a short distance from a shallow sector of Chincoteague Bay where countless seagulls patrol the mud flats, looking for food at low tide. Clams and crabs are among their favorite foods, but they cannot easily handle their finds without a little assist.

Many times in the summer, Thanh has noted that when a seagull finds a live clam in the mud at low tide, the bird will grasp it in its beak and rise to a high altitude over her wooden dock; then drop it on the deck to crack it open. After the shell of the clam cracks open, the bird descends to the deck and proceeds to eat the meat of the live clam. Many seagulls do this.

One day when Thanh Mahoney was standing near the dock and witnessed a seagull drop a clam from high altitude, she picked up the shattered shell and ate the clam, right then and there. The seagull was not amused. Soon, another seagull that had extracted another live clam from the mud again dropped it from high above, unto her dock. Once again, Thanh retrieved the shattered clam shell and proceeded to eat it. By then, there were numerous angry seagulls flying overhead, protesting loudly that Thanh was robbing them of their lunch. Nonetheless, Thanh told us, that on that day she enjoyed two fresh clams for her lunch.



She was aware that the seagulls were not happy, so she did not persist in antagonizing them by snatching away their clams. By the way, those seagulls also plucked crabs from the shallows and dropped them from high above unto the dock to stun them. Thanh Mahoney has witnessed those spectacles many times; thus it is no coincidence if an observer sees the remains of both clams and crabs on her wooden dock.

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## STREET TREES AND VILLAGE SHADE

There is little doubt that trees beautify the landscape in any large city or small town. Street trees are aesthetic treasures that may be ignored at times but gain attention when they are flowering in the spring and proudly showing off their brilliance in sun-lit splendor in the autumn.

Having and maintaining street trees can be a costly proposition especially in large cities because they must be integrated into an infrastructure that is not readily adapted to accommodate all trees in all places. But even the largest and busiest cities full of hustle and bustle are welcoming of the silent grace and passive beauty that stately trees add to the tableau.

Most European cities have a long tradition of planting street trees and indeed, one expects to share the civic pride of witnessing the seasonal displays of floral finery. “Unter den linden” is a classical German song that refers to the fabled linden trees of Berlin. And the well-maintained street trees of Southern France are spectacular. The huge Dipterocarps and *Shorea* trees lining the streets of Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam number in the thousands and have been adorning the boulevards there for well over a hundred years. Hundreds of teak trees play the same role throughout the streets of Seoul, Korea.

It is debatable whether street trees as aesthetic entities are worth the cost. When they come crashing down in a hurricane, many people will curse them. Yet, they persist in most cosmopolitan cities despite being ignored most of the time.

The situation regarding trees planted at public places in villages takes on a much larger scope. Village shade, particularly in African villages, has implications that go far beyond an aesthetic viewpoint. In many small villages scattered in arid and semi-arid regions of many African countries, the presence of just a few

mature trees in central locations makes a huge difference with social implications. Open-air schools are often taught under the shade of the broad crowns of trees that were planted to serve community interests. People tend to gather in the relative coolness of shade provided by village trees that were established and maintained with calculated awareness of their functions. In so many villages too numerous to mention, there may be only one or two mature trees that might be described as village trees. They are like magnets.

Because establishing and maintaining trees intended for the whole community must fall on the shoulders of a limited cadre of individuals who make it happen, the story of growth into maturity is only written over several years. In the interim, the would-be village trees go through seedling, sampling, and juvenile stages; while being threatened by desiccation through drought, disease and insect attack, predation of its branches by roaming goats, sheep, or other animals, and disfiguration by vandals. Any tree planted in a public place is subject to perturbations but in the African milieu, the risks and hazards are more numerous and more compelling than meet the eye.

Very few mature trees are present in some arid countries. In some countries like Namibia and South Africa, there are road signs announcing to motorists that there is a roadside tree a mile ahead. In some cases, the road signs also show a tree and a picnic bench. Not exactly village shade, but a welcome public shade that is heavily used.

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## MEETING A YOUNG NAVAJO ARTIST

### A Quick Stroll Around Four States

It was not a stroll around the block...it was a circular promenade at the perimeters of four states. At Four Corners, the intersection point of Utah, Arizona, Colorado and New Mexico; it is possible to do a quick stroll in all four states within 30 seconds or less. The visit to Four Corners had long been on the bucket list of the **Footloose Forester**. Mission Accomplished!

The US Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management completed the survey of the area in 1882 and established a marker there. Even at that time, the unique circumstances must have been a lively topic of discussion. Today, a sensationalist news magazine might entice readers with a headline story such as, "Tourist Attacks Helpless Moose at Four Corners". Reality, however; is more interesting.

The Four Corners site is a remote spot in the landscape of the Southwest that is on tribal land. The site has been improved by the cooperative participation of several Indian Nations of that region, including the Ute, the Navajo; the Hopi; the Apache; the Cheyenne; the Cherokee; and others.

Native craftsmen and artisans sell their wares on site; but many of the sellers are the artisans who themselves painted the motifs of local themes; and chipped and fashioned the stone spear points and arrowheads that are on display for sale. The **Footloose Forester** purchased a black obsidian arrowhead from a vendor who told him that his 12-year old son had fashioned it. It was a privilege and inspiring to

shake the hand of the 12-year old Navajo boy named Sonny, who was on hand to point out the arrowheads and spear points he himself had fashioned.

The many Indian Nations represented at the Four Corners site also constitute the cadre of craftsmen and artisans who may be seen, on site, working with stone chipping instruments, elk hide, red willow ax handles, feathers and paints—all to create works of art that otherwise might be taken for granted. The rich colors and exquisitely fashioned baskets, beads and hand-made arrows for hunting that are created on site belie the bleak barrenness of the surrounding desert. If the land seems dry and largely featureless, the culture of its people is anything but.

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## WHAT GOES AROUND CAME AROUND, AGAIN

The passing phases of our lives are marked by words and phrases that come into vogue out of the blue, are repeated often by trendsetters and hipsters, and eventually disappear from the daily vernacular. They may shrink into the background but do not disappear entirely. “What goes around, comes around” was a popular expression a few decades ago, but is seldom heard these days. That is not to say that its meaning is not remembered and understood. Make that its several meanings—because what goes around like a common cold or a political protest movement, comes around again when the physical or social environments are right. Tornados go around in summer months and come around again the following year. Commercials for new cars go around and come around again with new models.

A meaning-hungry purveyor of words and expressions in the person of the **Footloose Forester** was always fond of the expression “what goes around, comes around” because to him it meant more than one thing. To him it connoted the cyclical or regional spread of maladies like influenza or the *Ebola* virus, but it also meant the reoccurrence of shibboleths with historical implications. In addition, the revisitation to famous sites and monuments that were familiar in his past evoked a “what goes around, comes around” kind of response. In that sense, it evoked past episodes re-united with the present.

In one short but personally poignant chronicle of the **Footloose Forester**, he recalled first seeing specimens of the desert date, *Zyzyphus jujuba* in the Sind region of Pakistan; had another encounter in the Sahel region of Mali, and finally in a local horticultural nursery in rural Virginia. Today, two healthy jujube trees from that nursery are growing at the side of his house, and a picture of one of them adorns

the cover of his third volume of memoirs. Accordingly, he was impelled to label one chronicle, “What Goes Around, Comes Around” and commit it to the pages of a bound book.



Many visual examples of what goes around and comes around again are also found in the books and magazines that he reads. In recent years, he has seen and eventually extracted photos and parts of stories and articles from both Newsweek and TIME magazines. They continue to be vital sources of current news but also provide us with handy archival materials to which we can refer at our own convenience. Sadly, they often provide grim reminders of horrific events whose significance is reinforced by timely photos. For example, a Newsweek photo of the 1998 bombing of the US Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya was a reminder that for a **Footloose**

**Forester** who sometimes attended meetings in that embassy, that yet another terrorist attack was one more example of what goes around, comes around.

He has never forgotten the Pakistani Taliban attack on St. Dominic's R.C. Church in Bahawalpur, Pakistan in 1986. Although he had long ago departed Pakistan as a Peace Corps Volunteer in 1966, St. Dominic's was the church he attended, thus the news reports of the massacre there was an earlier case of what goes around, comes around. The details of the slaughter of churchgoers in Bahawalpur are part of a newspaper account that he keeps in his files.

Likewise, the photo and story of a jetliner hijacked to Moroni, Comoros in 2001 was a “goes around, comes around” story of Islamist fundamentalists perpetrating another act of terrorism. In that hijacking, the plane crashed into the ocean just a few hundred yards offshore and close to the runway. Some people on shore actually swam out to rescue survivors. The photos reminded the **Footloose Forester** that even in the remote archipelago of the Comoros, his mind was returning to the scene of the crime and to a place where he had conducted field studies. The subsequent news reports testify to yet another episode of “what goes around, comes around.”

Not all haunting memories of events in the past are so gruesome. In our little village of Greenbackville, Virginia there was a time a few years ago that a spate of arson fires had us all wondering what was going on. Over 20 arson fires were committed before the guilty couple was finally identified and arrested. Why is this a “what goes around, comes around” story? Because more than two years later, there, in TIME

magazine, was a book cover photo of one of the many old abandoned houses in rural Accomack County, Virginia where we live. All of the arson fires focused on abandoned houses that took place in our county, and not too far away. The book itself was about Accomack County and its infamous arsonists but the cover photo of one of the charred houses was an alarming reminder that, all too often, what goes around, comes around.

Finally, another book with a story about a place visited long ago wraps up this reflectional chronicle. The place was the Changa Manga Plantation north of Lahore, Pakistan, a large hardwood forest of mostly rosewood (*Dalbergia sissoo*) and sal (*Shorea robusta*) trees. The **Footloose Forester** first visited there in 1964 and again in the pages of the book, *Foresters of the Raj*--on a sunny day in June 2017. Truth is sometimes stranger than fiction, hence when he put down the book with the story of Changa Manga Plantation, he immediately picked up the *TIME* magazine to discover the book review about his Accomack County. Both the book and the magazine were on his reading schedule for that day and both were at arm's length. But he had no idea that it would be a double-barreled volley of "what goes around, comes around."



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## HACKING THE RUSSIAN ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

Once in a while when a suspect news report gets aired with a misleading spin, the **Footloose Forester** goes into one of his petulant moods and yearns to compose a chronicle to mollify himself and his sense of propriety. With a little luck, and if he shares his chronicle accounts, once in a while he might make an impression on others. This is one of those chronicles that he hopes will touch a nerve somewhere.

The private meeting between the President of the United States and the President of Russia, as part of the recent meeting of G20 nations in Hamburg, Germany just might get spun in some outlets of the American press as a consensus determination that Russia did not hack our 2016 national elections. So said the Russian president, and his contention may seem to be accepted by our own president, based on his very weak response to the issue. Such a state of affairs would open the door to all parties just moving on, as they say they want to do. Maybe moving on by not even looking back, regardless of the gravity of the circumstances.

Unfortunately, somebody on one side of the logistical arrangement agreed to have a very limited number of persons present during the two-hour session, during which no notes were taken. Henceforth any historical accounts of the meeting must make use of high-level “he said/ he said” versions that cannot easily be disputed. If either side has anything to hide, all they have to do is to appease their own constituents with whichever version they want. Whatever one thinks of our own president or the Russian president, there is little doubt that both of them have a long history of deceptions and lies.

The reason for this chronicle is to make a very personal point that has a painful and ironic petulance associated with it. It pertains to a confidential matter about Russia and an episode or two that transpired

inside the US Embassy in Moscow during the mid-1990s. As an Environmental Analyst, one of several consultants working on Vice-President Al Gore's environmental initiative in the Russian Far East, the **Footloose Forester** was responsible for putting together his own individual report of findings and recommendation regarding a long-term strategy on the green environment in the Russian Far East. To do so, he took notes wherever he went and compiled them into his working draft. When it was time to submit his report, his draft of 53 type-written pages was turned over to the purported editors who were then instructed to boil down all of the several reports into a 5-6-page executive summary. There were many environmental issues at stake, including conservation of the Siberian Tiger and forest resources.

Although he eventually got a copy of the executive report that was submitted to the office of the Vice President of the United States, the **Footloose Forester** hardly recognized any of his words or ideas. Furthermore, he believes that most of his recommendations were ignored and a few of them were actually changed. So much for taking detailed notes and committing his findings to a draft report that may have affected his established reputation. The point is, taking notes and putting concrete evidence into the form of a written account ensures the intellectual honesty of the note taker, even if the notes may be challenged. But it does not preclude having somebody else doing the hacking to their own advantage. Having said that, the excerpted comments that **Footloose Forester** cut and pasted in the space below is another version of a hack. The excerpt\*\* below has nothing to do with the current chronicle except to demonstrate that it is easy to hack the work of someone else. Changing things around is just another way to look at things, so authors of field studies have to be prepared to defend their works.

\*\*Political appointees at DOE and the White House can and do make changes in reports from the career staff. But in five years as a DOE political appointee in the 1990s, I'm not sure I ever saw the secretary's office actually reverse the findings of a study they had ordered. I imagine this draft was leaked to make any such reversal politically harder.

We will find out soon enough if team Trump erases yet more findings contradictory to their ideology, since the final version of the already overdue...

Having a high-level policy meeting between two world leaders without the benefit of a written record is an invitation for mischief. Contortions, word parsing, disguised intentions, backtracking, you name it. The nation awaits the deliberations and the fallout.

If the President of Russia tells the world that his administration did not hack the American electoral process in 2016, and if the President of the United States peddles the same idea, only time will tell what consequences will manifest. The irony associated with his own hacked reports about environmental circumstances in Russia in 1995 was enough to open an old wound in the **Footloose Forester**. If he is ever called to testify under oath about his version of events, he is prepared to take that oath and use his contemporaneously written notes and draft report as a basis. As regards our current policies vis-à-vis diplomacy issues with the Russians, don't count on our elected president to tell the truth, the whole truth, based on his selective memory.

Detractors and critics of our elected president may sound the alarm regarding attempts to change official transcripts. Supporters may deny that changing the wording and the import of transcripts has taken place, but there are enough checks and balances in place to ensure that sounding the alarm about hacking official records does indeed take place. One only has to compare the live and recorded broadcasts of meetings in the White House with the doctored (after the fact) transcripts that purport to document the events as part of official proceedings. As a reminder, any skeptical reader of this chronicle should compare the live recording of the POTUS on 10 January 2018 with the doctored transcript of the meeting which has been made available for public consumption. HINT: the transcript has been hacked to make it sounds that our elected leader took a stance different that he actually did at the time.

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## WE TOOK THE TUKTUK

When you are thinking of taking a cruise you can readily imagine what the major mode of conveyance is going to be and perhaps even know in advance what it will look like. The cruise ship may even have a name you already know. Getting to your destination is a large part of the fun, indeed may be the most anticipated aspect of the trip. What the destinations are may or may not even be as important. And what you do at those destinations is not nearly as predictable and may not even be possible. The mysteries and the allure of the unknown are like icing on the cake.

Going on a pilgrimage, however; implies taking a trip wherein much of the allure and mystery are wrapped up in the anticipation. Choices of conveyance are secondary considerations; it is the destination that is the focus.

Making a pilgrimage, first and foremost, implies that reaching that destination is the goal. The mode or modes of transportation are not necessarily known in advance because getting there may be a large part of the crusade to mount a pilgrimage. When the general locale of the destination is known and that crusade is to return to the place where you were born, it may involve crossing an ocean. In the case of the pilgrimage of the Bengal Tiger to visit the town where she spent some of her growing up years, it would involve travel by cars, buses, jet airplanes, taxis, ferry boats and a few tuktuks. To get to her final destination in northern Cambodia, we took a TukTuk.

A TukTuk is the modern version of a Cambodian rickshaw that is powered by a motorcycle. An open carriage capable of seating up to six people, TukTuks used as taxis are two-wheeled affairs that are

mounted by means of a trailer hitch behind a lightweight motorcycle, most of which are powered by a single engine in the 125-150cc range.



Air conditioned TukTuk

Our rented TukTuk took us to the places we wanted to go, for the negotiated period of time we contracted for. It was the final leg of the pilgrimage to Stung Treng, Cambodia, the place where Bengal Tiger fished from the banks of the Mekong River when she was an adventurous little girl.

Finding the exact spot along the river where we would look for the homestead of her grandpa was not going to be easy because in the many decades since, the Mekong River had eroded long stretches of the banks; but most importantly, her grandfather's house had been torn down (along with several others) when a large patch of land was expropriated by a man named Norodom Sihanouk. Yes, that Norodom Sihanouk, Prince Sihanouk, then King Sihanouk.

The despotic but revered man who ruled Cambodia as a young King Sihanouk in 1941-45 and again as King in 1993-2004 when the Cambodian National Assembly voted to restore the monarchy, at some point decided to build a summer palace on the banks of the Mekong in Stung Treng. He expropriated the land he wanted and it included the land of her grandfather. He razed the existing homes there and built his walled summer palace in their place. At some future time, his enemies burned down his summer palace (local people said it was guerilla forces loyal to Pol Pot). Today all that remains are the charred and blackened walls of his palace.

There is a belief in some circles that destiny includes the improbable meeting of people who were pre-ordained to become part of our lives. The concept of such a karmic meeting has been described as a “sacred contract” as the manifestation of one facet of individual destiny. In Stung Treng, Cambodia in March 2017, that sacred contract between Thu Pellek and a man named Pham Huynh was manifest.



Kim Oanh, Pham Huynh, and Thu Pellek

As an old man who knew her father and her uncle, Pham Huynh showed us the site where her grandfather lived. He even remembers the little child named Thu who went fishing alone on the banks of the river near where his house was. A first-person witness to the past made the long-anticipated pilgrimage to Stung Treng a very rewarding one.

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## THE TITANIC WAS ONLY 2 ½ MILES AWAY

Who would say such a thing, unless they were on the ocean, in a ship? After all, the Titanic still lies silently at a depth of 12,500 feet on the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean, some 375 nautical miles southeast of the coast of Labrador and 1,000 miles due east of Boston, Massachusetts. The answer would be, among others, one Paul Pellek, crewmember of a ship repairing transatlantic cable across the Atlantic Ocean.

Paul Pellek spent some 5 years, off-and-on, laying and repairing underwater cable in the Atlantic Ocean between New York and Europe, during his 32-year career with AT & T; so, he would know. Why?

When the crew of the AT&T cable ship Long Lines stopped to wave hello and chat on the high seas with the crew of the research vessel Knorr, little did Paul know that the very next day it would be announced to the world that the Knorr had just located the Titanic. Paul Pellek was on site where history was being made.



Paul Pellek was there when the Titanic was located on the ocean floor



Many people know that the Titanic went down in the North Atlantic on 15 April 1912; and others recall that the famous explorer Dr. Robert D. Ballard discovered its location on the bottom some 70 years later. Not so many people know that Paul Pellek was there when the research vessel Knorr confirmed the identity of the Titanic on 31 August 1985. Let Paul tell you in his own words about that historic event; an important part of his legacy and one he will never forget.

*Since early March (1985) the CS (cable ship) Long Lines has been at sea repairing TAT 6 (transatlantic telephone).*

*Today, our job was completed. It was August 31<sup>st</sup>, 1985. We were steaming back to Saint Johns, Newfoundland. In the distance we spotted a small vessel. On the vast ocean anything was interesting, so the crew brought us up alongside for a closer look. We got close enough to read the vessel's name and home port. She was the RV (research vessel) Knorr from Woods Hole, Mass. A strange place name I thought. Little did I know, but in a day's time it would be famous. After a quick hello we continued our journey. We had one more day till our cruise ended.*

*With the harbor now in sight a tug came to greet us. Just as it did there was an announcement over the ship's loud speaker. It was a radio broadcast that was being broadcast worldwide. The research vessel Knorr had found the Titanic.*

The geographic coordinates were later revealed by the explorer Bob Ballard who located the Titanic in 1985. He kept those coordinates somewhat secret until he cleared up the legal ramifications of his find; but now you too, can re-locate the stern section of the Titanic at N 41°43'35" and W 49°56'54". Since the ship broke apart after hitting an iceberg at 11:40PM on the night of 15 April 1912, its bow section was discovered some miles away, at N 41°43'57" and W 49°56'49".

The research vessel Knorr is owned by the U.S. Navy and operated by Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute for the ocean research community. Knorr is best known as the ship that supported a team of WHOI and French researchers in 1985 as they discovered the wreck of the RMS Titanic. The Titanic was only 2 ½ miles from where Paul Pellek was standing on the deck of CS Long Lines. That is to say, the Titanic was over two miles straight down.

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